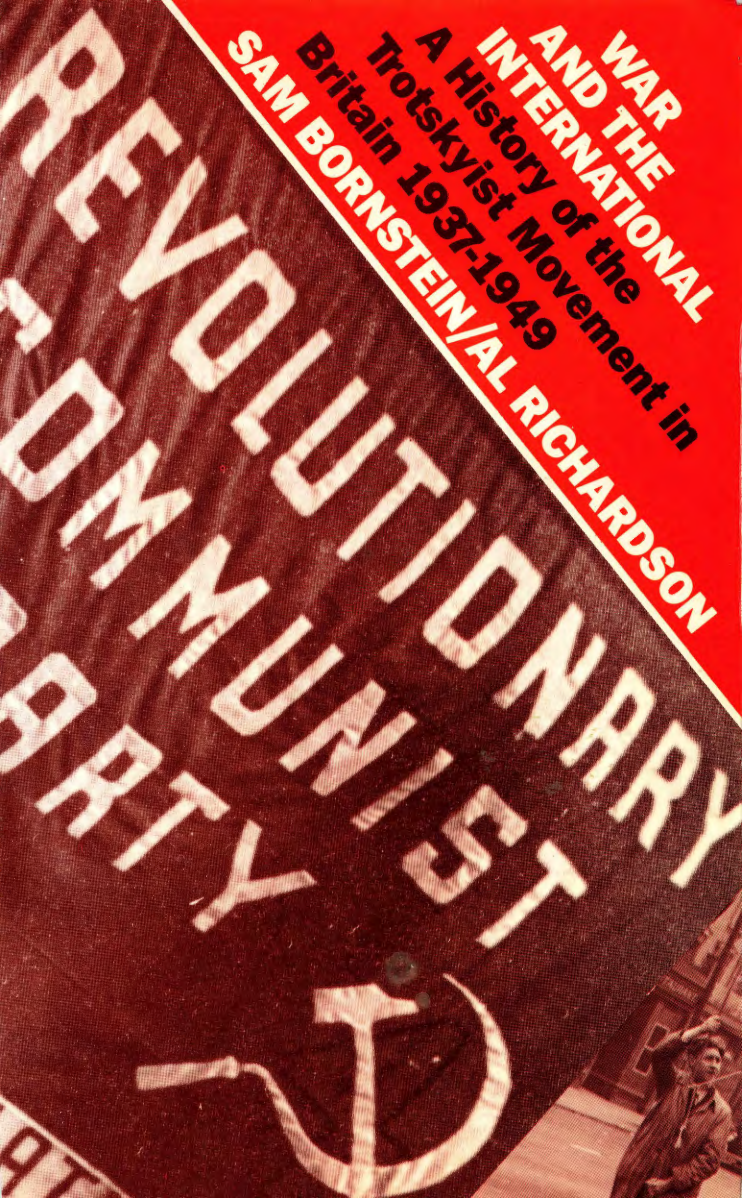


WAR
AND THE
INTERNATIONAL
Trotskyist Movement in
Britain 1937-1949
SAM BORNSTEIN/AL RICHARDSON



The War and the International

*To the Revolutionary Internationalists
who served the cause of the
working class during the
Second Imperialist War*

The War and the International

A History of the
Trotskyist Movement
in Britain 1937 - 1949

Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson



SOCIALIST PLATFORM

Published by Socialist Platform

First edition October 1986

Copyright © 1986 Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson

Phototypeset by Impeccable 01 609 9974

Printed and bound in Great Britain by

A. Wheaton and Co. Ltd., Exeter

Cover design by David King

ISBN 0 9508423 3 8 (paper)

**Trade Distribution: Housemans, 5 Caledonian Road,
London N1 9DX.**

Socialist Platform Ltd., BCM Box 7646, London WC1N 3XX.

Contents

<i>Forward</i> by Fred Jackson	vii
<i>Preface</i>	xi
<i>Chapter One</i> New Beginnings and The Test of War The W.I.L. 1937 - 1941	1
<i>Chapter Two</i> Unity and Disintegration The R.S.L. 1938 - 1943	20
<i>Chapter Three</i> Preparing For Power: The W.I.L. 1941 - 1944	52
<i>Chapter Four</i> Rebuilding the British Section, 1943 - 1944	97
<i>Chapter Five</i> Jail and Missed Opportunity: The Revolutionary Communist Party, 1944 - 1945	114
<i>Chapter Six</i> A New World and Old Conflicts, 1944 - 1947	160
<i>Chapter Seven</i> Back to Stalinism, The End of the R.C.P. 1947 - 1949	209
<i>Chapter Eight</i> Trotskyism's Legacy	238
<i>Appendix One</i>	244
<i>Appendix Two</i> The Wartime Agitation of a Trotskyist Soldier	246
<i>Index</i>	248

Illustrations

1. The Publications of the W.I.L. and R.C.P.
2. a) The W.I.L. Centre, 61 Northdown Street, Kings Cross.
b) The R.C.P. Centre, 256 Harrow Road.
3. The Neath By-elections, 1945.
4. R.C.P. Mayday Demonstration, 1946.

(between pages 128 and 129)

Foreward

It is with mixed feelings and reluctance that I have accepted the author's invitation to write an introduction to this second volume of their history of the early Trotskyist movement in Britain. I am a most unsuitable person to be writing this introduction. I do so only because of a pressure exerted on me by Sam and Al, who think that being one of the dwindling 'old-timers' is qualification enough, and out of admiration for the dedication and self-sacrifice that kept them 'grubbing in the archives' for thirteen years, researching the two volumes of this history and its necessary predecessor, *Two Steps Back*.

I had a working class background; my father, a skilled artisan in the pottery trade, had moved from Stoke-on-Trent on completion of his apprenticeship, to a job in Scotland. He had been a member of the I.L.P. since his teens, and of the Clarion Scouts, the group of cyclists who used to tour the country making Socialist speeches, largely in the open air. I grew up on a diet of Socialist discussion, the *New Leader*, the *Glasgow Forward*, and a constant stream of Socialist speakers being put up in our house for one night. By the time I was ten years old I had read Blatchfords' *Merrie England, Britain for the British* and Kropotkins's *Fields, Factories and Workshops*. In 1929 my father was invited to stand as I.L.P. candidate for the Ayrshire County Council elections. His employer, the then Conservative Chairman of the Council, told him bluntly that he was not prepared to sit at the same table as one of his employees, and ordered him to withdraw - or else. My father refused, lost his job, and the Pottery Workers' Union was too weak to do anything about it. This was at the start of the first world slump, and for two years I learned what it was like to live on 'the dole' - 17 shillings for the man, 9 shillings for his wife, and two shillings for each of four children. At the end of two years my father secured a poorly paid job on the other side of Scotland, and two years later a better-paid job, still in his trade, back in his native England, leaving me behind in Scotland to complete the last three years of an apprenticeship I had secured on leaving

school. At a wage of 8 shillings a week, it was impossible to live in lodgings, and my parents had to subsidise me to the extent of £1 per week - a considerable sacrifice in those days.

My father remained a member of the I.L.P. after dis-affiliation from the Labour Party, and it was inevitable that I graduated in the same direction. I joined the I.L.P. at the age of 16, shortly after dis-affiliation, and remained there a little over seven years. In 1932, in that part of Scotland, at least, there was little emphasis on theory in the I.L.P. There was practical activity; attendance at branch meetings; attendance, largely uncoordinated, at Trade Union meetings, participation in demonstrations of the unemployed; and, above all, propaganda meetings, mostly in the open air. In those days there was no money for printed publicity; meetings were advertised by chalking the streets and pavements at strategic spots - and many a barked knuckle I acquired! Here I began to learn to speak in public, first as chairman trying to gather an audience for the advertised speaker, and later as a speaker in my own right.

But as a consequence of these activities I met the local Communist Party - both members! They talked to me about Marx and Engels, about Lenin and the Bolshevik Party, and I began to read some of the Marxist Classics published by Lawrence and Wishart. I was never tainted with Stalinist ideas (even the 'soft' *New Leader* had inoculated me against that), but I began to realise the importance of the Revolutionary Party. The I.L.P. had been calling itself a revolutionary party since disaffiliation, but as the years passed I couldn't equate these perfectly sincere, honest, and in many cases self-sacrificing comrades with Lenin's Bolsheviks. 'Socialists' who railed against the iniquities of capitalism on 'moral' grounds - but couldn't explain the Labour Theory of Value; 'revolutionaries' who were unacquainted with Lenin's *State and Revolution*; pacifists in Mussolini's war against Abyssinia - all of these made me increasingly uneasy. With these somewhat subjective feelings, but no particularly clear objective criticism of Party policy, I ended my apprenticeship and obtained a job in London, in November 1937. (I had first moved to Glasgow, ostensibly to study for qualifications which was the logical continuation of my apprenticeship, but politics - the Spanish Civil War had broken out - proved incompatible with serious study, and I gave it up).

In the London I.L.P., for the first time in the six years of my political life, I began to meet some semblance of real political discussion and the importance of theory. I began to hear about Trotskyism. I saw a few pieces of Trotskyist literature, and I found my way to Speakers' Corner at Hyde Park. Here I met the newly-formed Workers' International League, and I knew, at once, that this was what I had been looking for. These people were largely proletarian, they were dedicatedly active, and attendance at a few of their 'study circles' convinced me that they had a serious attitude to theory. Here, for the first time, Marxism began to come alive for me. It is almost true to say that, far from them recruiting me, I recruited myself to them.

I have often wished that I had come to London a couple of years earlier, and had experienced for myself the events leading up to the foundation of the W.I.L. But I did meet some members of the Militant Labour League, listened to their arguments (against the leadership of the W.I.L.) and was not impressed. I joined the W.I.L. and began the ten most satisfying years of my life. The successes of the W.I.L., its transition - as recounted in this book - into the Revolutionary Communist Party, British Section of the Fourth International, the successes of the R.C.P. in excruciatingly difficult conditions of wartime, and the Stalinist slanders, reinforced my conviction that the decision to set up the W.I.L. had been correct. I was in a real revolutionary movement at last; I was a member of a Bolshevik organisation; and the international socialist revolution was 'just around the corner'. For nearly ten years, every minute that could be spared from the unfortunate necessity to earn a living was devoted to the movement. Even in prison; the result of the 'Sheffield Incident' described in Chapter 1, I managed to make Socialist propaganda, and later, having been conscripted into the Fleet Air Arm, I was at one time selling three dozen copies of *Socialist Appeal*.

The mistakes and weaknesses of the R.C.P., described by the authors from Chapter 5 onwards, may be obvious now - in retrospect. They were not obvious to me. I do not think they were obvious to any of us at the time. It was not until late 1947 that the changed conditions of the post-war world, and the decline of the party so ably explained in the book, began to make inroads into the euphoria which had pervaded my life in the previous period. I began to draw conclusions from the existence of the atomic bomb. I began to feel that, while I had no quarrel with the policy and programme, there just wasn't *time* to rejuvenate this disintegrating group into the mass revolutionary party which was needed, before the onset of World War 3, which would bring civilisation to an end. And so, in 1948, I left the movement.

I remember that when I announced to Jock and Millie Haston (Lee) that I was leaving politics, Millie warned me (with Jock nodding his head in grave agreement): "You'll be sorry, Fred - you'll degenerate. *There is no life outside the Fourth International.*" It is ironic that within a year they themselves were "outside the Fourth International".

A new generation will build a revolutionary leadership. Of one thing I am sure; the new generation will have to base itself on the ideas of Marx and Engels, their development of Lenin and Trotsky, and the first four congresses of the Communist International, and build a world party on the foundation of the democratic centralism which characterised the R.C.P. in its best years.

In conclusion, I can only support those commentators on the authors' previous books who have emphasised the importance for Socialists of a study of the early history of the Trotskyist movement - its successes and its failures. Outside the Fourth International there is no life. Here I am not

talking about the multifarious sects, or the various “International Committees for” or “International Executives of” the Fourth International. But outside the body of doctrine represented by the R.C.P. in its best days, the ideas of Marx and Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, there can be no ‘life’ - there can only be adaptation to capitalism, and an attempt to make oneself as personally comfortable as possible within the framework of this iniquitous system.

Fred Jackson

12th July, 1986.

Preface

It is now nearly fifteen years since we discovered the need for a history of Trotskyism in Britain from the paucity of available material, and the gross ignorance shown by those who have since written about it only serves to confirm our opinion.¹

However, it seems to have been missed by practically all the Trotskyist groups that our first volume was written to hold up the past as an accusing mirror to their present politics, and we have obviously not succeeded in our aim. It is scant consolation to recall that the Marxist pioneers themselves, realised long before we did the difficulties of trying to influence British Socialists by writing books. This being the case, we will confine ourselves to an outline of some of the results of our survey.

Firstly, the uneven value of the evidence, and the gaps in it, show the damage done to honest investigation by the hoarding or concealment of documents by the present groups to suppress or distort the past in the interests of their current politics. Much crucial material was never made available to us; many prominent figures refused to be interviewed, though some have been obliged to reconsider through pressure from their own ranks since *Against the Stream* appeared. Particularly glaring are the gaps in the writings of L.D. Trotsky, showing that even the more comprehensive collections of his works on Britain can only claim to be the barest selections. In at least one instance, we are probably justified in claiming that a document has been suppressed in the interests of factional considerations.² Since the full documentation of Trotsky's contribution is not even available, it is hardly surprising that there is still a marked lack of enthusiasm for the formation of a body dedicated to the history of Trotskyism in Britain, or to the collection of an archive or library, along the same lines, open to the free investigation of the Labour movement.

This is almost certainly connected to the discovery that the Fourth International had already undergone serious degeneration before the ending of the Second World War. The confusion over the course of the European revolution, shown in the Goldman/Morrow controversy³, and the gradual abandonment of the campaign for an American Labour Party, allow us to trace the source of the failure to the S.W.P. of the U.S.A., as a

1. E.g. Tariq Ali, *The Coming British Revolution*, London, 1973, p.121.

2. Below, p.46, n.5.

3. Below, pp.172-175

result, no doubt, of the immense pressure exerted upon the Fourth International and the difficulty of making a clean break with the Comintern in the first place. The roots of the S.W.P.'s present evolution, into an organisation of the purest Stalinist type thus lie in its dropping of transitional politics far in the past and can in no way be ascribed to a 'wrong turning' supposedly made some time in the last decade. One crying need for the future is thus for a serious history of the Fourth International as a whole, analysing at every stage of its development the departure from the practice of revolutionary Marxism as summarised in the *Transitional Programme*. This is a task we cheerfully leave to others, as the writers of this book possess neither the documentation nor the expertise for it.

But a conclusion that does emerge from the material, that we have been able to bring together, is that when basic Marxist ideas are introduced into the activity of the labour movement, they lose their abstract and schematic character and are recreated on a far higher level as a result of being tested in the life of the working class, on no matter how small a scale. The contrast between the level of discussion and analysis achieved by the Trotskyists during the period covered by this book and their first halting efforts described in *Against the Stream* must be obvious to all who lay the accounts side by side. In no sense can this be explained by the individual talents of those who hammered out these ideas; whilst it is true that Lee, Haston, Grant and Tearse were men of exceptional ability, they were no more gifted than Ridley, Dewar, Groves, Harber and particularly C.L.R. James. Yet the leap in understanding and insight is a qualitative one. First comes the realisation that United Front politics in Britain means calling upon the Labour leaders to take power, and that this is the form assumed by the Bolshevik slogan of 1917 in today's terms. Then follow the elaboration of a coherent strategy to defend the working class during mass lay-offs, the insight gained into the spread of Stalinism in the post-war world, the nature of the coming boom, and the understanding of the function of the state in the economy and society of developed capitalism.

These theoretical achievements spring directly from the intense activity of the W.I.L. inside the trade unions during the War, the result of an attempt of no more than 350 people to apply the *Transitional Programme* to the struggles of the working class during the second imperialist world conflict. The industrial triumphs of Barrow and the workers' control in the Nottingham R.O.F. and the political victory of the Newcastle trial opened up wider horizons of understanding. For the conditions in which the Trotskyists worked in 1941-5 were of heightened activity and renewed confidence of the labour movement, along with the drawing of fresh forces into the struggle, the opposite of the years of slump, defeat and demoralisation of the working class that the pioneer Trotskyists faced in 1926-38. The interaction between theory and practice during the War, in turn created theory on a far higher and more generalised level. It became stronger, more coherent, and more durable than the separate and scattered

insights gained by the struggle of the movement up to that time that was the precondition for its development.

A more uncomfortable conclusion is that the bulk of the Trotskyist organisations today, in Britain, uniformly middle class in composition, saturated with anti-working class attitudes of the Hampstead and Islington élites, have no valid class claim to the title they assume. They represent rather a kaleidoscope of Syndicalism, Social Democracy, and (especially) Third Period or Popular Front Stalinism - that is, where they do not represent Liberalism at first hand. Their deliberate and persistent attempts to split the structure of the Labour Party into inchoate fragments, by playing upon differences of sex or race, identify them as radicals, not Socialists at all, as instruments in a Popular Front drive against the class basis of Labour movement politics. For this aversion to seeing politics in class terms is an ideal milieu for the initiation of a Popular Front operation by the Stalinists, who are only grasping another opportunity provided for themselves. In some cases, such as their promotion of the attacks of demagogues and careerists upon Liverpool City Council, timed to coincide with the press witch-hunt and the Labour bureaucracy's purge, the activities of these 'Trotskyists' amount to provocation.

For Trotskyism is a Marxist critique of Stalinism and a clean break with it, and it is essential to its nature that it cannot accommodate to Stalinism and still remain in existence. And this ideological collapse of anti-Stalinist Marxism is all the more alarming in the face of the Popular Front strategy elaborated by the Communist Party towards the coming General Election. The only positive feature is that the Communist Party itself has split when it came up against the cohesion of the British working class and its unconscious determination to resist an attack upon its institutions. But this should not blind us to the ideological domination that Stalinism exercises over all sections of the left, an influence that has the potential, in the event of a crisis, to convert itself in an instance into real political capital. Thus, for example, *New Socialist*, after a promising start, is becoming a carbon copy of *Marxism Today*, not only overlapping in themes and approach, but even in personnel; Stalinist articles appear in *The Guardian* on a regular basis; and Stalinist entrists have been sent into other parties as well as Labour to prepare the ground for an S.D.P./Liberal/Labour 'anti-Thatcherite' coalition. In the meantime, obvious Stalinist entry papers such as *Straight Left* circulate inside the Labour Party without let or hindrance from the bureaucracy itself preoccupied with witch-hunting Liverpool's Labour Council.

The construction of an up-to-date Marxist programme and practice thus becomes a matter of some urgency. In our last chapter we give it as our opinion that Trotskyism is merely the form taken by Marxism in the conditions of the inter-war defeats of the working class, and that Marxism has to be further developed to meet the needs of the post-war world. No amount of appeal to a supposed Trotskyist 'orthodoxy' or the repetition of

Trotsky's statements, as if they were scriptures, can take the place of this necessary reappraisal. Those who are willing and able to do this will render an incalculable service to the working class in the trying circumstances that lie ahead of it. We hope that our efforts will have contributed in some small part to this urgent task, if only by making it clearer what is Trotskyism and what obviously is not.

It only remains for us now to thank all those who have helped us along the way that has been long, difficult, and uphill. Harry Wicks, John Archer and Julian Harber have kindly drawn our attention to inaccuracies in our previous book and, if an improved edition does appear, we shall be glad to point them out in any Trotskyist journal that is willing to give us the space.

Our debt is even heavier to those who have come forward to provide oral source material since the publication of *Against the Stream*. Some reminiscences such as those of E. Rogers and C.L.R. James, properly belong in a revised edition of it; others, such as those of Alex Acheson, have had to be incorporated at the last minute into this book's footnotes and appendix because of our publication deadline. A major disappointment was that equally valuable matter, supplied by Bill Hunter, as yet incomplete, came to us too late even to be transcribed and typed up. For it is agreed on all sides that much of the value of this and the previous book springs from the interviews granted to us by all those listed in Appendix One below, and our gratitude to those who were willing to talk to us can readily be appreciated by all who read what they have to say. In this sense the book is not only about them, but largely by them as well.

The same follows for documentary materials. Arthur Shute has placed his incomparably rich archives at our disposal, and Margarita Dewar and Alex Acheson have given us access to their private correspondence. We take this opportunity to pass on not only our own thanks, but those of our readers, for the gems of information we have been able to mine in them.

Last, but certainly not least, we thank the Prometheus Research Library of New York and other friends of Socialist Platform, who have sustained us with their support and encouragement to such an extent that the appearance of our names alone upon the front of this book, ranks as an act of presumption. Clarence Chrysostom and Bill Thompson laboured at the research along with us; our secretary, Jim Ring and our agent, Andrew Burgin, guided us through the maze of legal and organisational procedures; Linda Finn grappled with the soul destroying task of typing and re-typing the manuscript; and Bruce Robinson has again acquitted himself with distinction in the necessary but unwelcome task of providing us with an index.

Our thanks go out to all these, and we hope that we have not disappointed the faith that they placed in us.

Sam Bornstein
Al Richardson

9th July, 1986.

Chapter One

New Beginnings and The Test Of War: The W.I.L. 1937 - 1941

At the end of the thirties two attempts were made to bring some sort of order into the Trotskyist movement in Britain. The first, that of the 'Lee Group', tried to place the movement on a firmer basis inside the working class by breaking with the sectarian atmosphere of the other groups at the time. The other was a result of an International initiative to organise the existing tendencies into a section of the Fourth International that was about to be proclaimed. One was a political and activist answer to the problem, whilst the other bore all the marks of an administrative convenience. How the two solutions measured up to the crisis of the Second World War forms the theme of this and the following chapter.

The situation was certainly a serious one. As a document later issued by the W.I.L. summarised it:

“During the period of the campaign of the left Opposition for re-entry into the Communist Parties, it was possible for a loose collection of individuals to hold together, for in this country it enabled them to appear in public as ‘critics’ while binding them to no real programme of activity..... From 1934 to 1938 a continuous series of splits took place. The political lines were, as a rule, not fundamental in character, but on questions of tactics, which were raised to immutable principles. The factions were characterised by a core who, generally speaking, broke along the lines of personal affiliation. The few who remained on the periphery of these factions - mainly fresh elements turning to the Trotskyist viewpoint - moved aimlessly from one group to another seeking a lead.....

During the whole of this period, the International Secretariat was completely misinformed as to the real situation in the British movement - its strength, the forms of work it conducted, its support among the workers, and in every other aspect of its activities. The loose connection between the I.S. and the British movement facilitated this.....

Each year - and sometimes twice a year - a 'unity' Conference was called, and without any serious preparation or intention. The soft elements who had proved themselves incapable of any continuity of organised work, who had dropped out of the movement from time to time, appeared on the platform and played a predominant role in the 'discussions'. Each year it became more and more obvious that a genuine unification among the old elements was absolutely precluded, because of the determination of the 'leaders' to retain their independence and resist any encroachments on their positions, and most important, because of the absence of a genuine rank and file. It was evident that unification would only take place on the basis of a common programme of action on the basis of common work".¹

The 'Lee Group' came from a new influx of Trotskyists from South Africa. Ever since 1934, small groups from the two Trotskyist organisations there had been coming to Britain, as it became all the more clear that real activity in South Africa could only spring from the black workers themselves rather than from the privileged minority of white workers. In the summer of 1937 Ralph and Millie Lee (Kahn), Heaton Lee and Dick Frieslich arrived in Britain and were contacted at Charles Sumner's flat by Jock Haston from the Paddington group of the 'Militant' organisation. Ralph Lee had exceptional literary and political talent, and Millie was a gifted organiser. Haston moved their acceptance into the group at its first conference which took place on 1st and 2nd August, 1937.²

They were hardly in their new organisation when they ran straight into the clique atmosphere that had already done so much damage in the British movement. By September, Charles Van Gelderen had passed on a rumour based on a letter from his brother in South Africa to Harber and Jackson that Ralph Lee had misled a strike of 'native workers' in the 'Laundry Workers' Union' (*sic*) and then decamped to England with the strike funds, based on a report in the *Trades and Labour Journal* which was represented as the official organ of the South African T.U.C.³ For 3 months Van Gelderen failed to confirm the story or supply a copy of the journal in question, and instead of confronting Lee straight away with it, Harber and Jackson spread the story through the group. By the time Lee found out about it at an E.C. meeting on 13th November, ten others knew about it, including John Archer, who passed it on to Rudolph Klement of the I.S. whilst in France as a delegate to the conference of the P.O.I., the French Trotskyists.

Lee had good reason to be annoyed, since these slanders had come from the South African Communist Party, and they had been compounded by allowing them to be spread by gossip instead of an immediate confidential report to the highest committee of the organisation. Neither he, nor any of the other South Africans had been approached, and any one of them could have supplied a satisfactory answer. As the group was about to appoint its

new officers, and Lee's name had been put forward as Secretary (and Millie had actually been proposed as literature secretary) he was convinced that Jackson and Harber were using the stories to isolate him because they feared for their own positions.

Lee raised the issue at a General Members' Meeting on November 14th, 1937, in the course of which the leadership "lied outrageously",⁴ and in the discussion that followed Harber, Jackson and Van Gelderen were censured and reduced to probationary membership.⁵ They resisted this by pointing out that they owed their positions to a higher body of the group than the London Members' meeting, which did not have the power to remove national officers of the group, and got the Executive Committee of the 20th November to reverse the verdict⁶, whilst tampering with the minutes of the previous meeting to represent Lee as a megalomaniac⁷ and to remove Ted Grant's charges completely from the record.⁸ On 27th November Lee wrote to press charges of lying, evasion, shifting the blame from one to the other, avoiding questions and distorting the minutes,⁹ charges which were taken up by Jock Haston.¹⁰

Before Lee could present his case to the next London aggregate Jackson and Harber tried to preempt the affair with a motion deploring a split on the issue and insisting that all comrades should loyally abide by the decision of the group. When this passed by 25 votes to 6 and 9 abstentions, Lee knew that he would never get fair treatment from any of them, and walked out, taking with him Ted Grant, Gerry Healy, Jock Haston, Betty Hamilton, Millie Lee, Heaton Lee and Jessie Strachan. The group executive then passed a resolution saying that he had "shown himself to be a careerist and a megalomaniac, and that these traits must have displayed themselves in his career in the South African Section",¹¹ and wrote for confirmation, not to the section, but to one Fanny Klenerman¹² who sent back more factual inaccuracies and a description of Lee as a "bad element" and "vindictive and anarchistic".¹³

Now that the issue had become international Harber and Jackson had to take the consequences. The Secretary of the Workers' Party of South Africa wrote to express amazement at the delay of the Militant Group in contacting them, describing Van Gelderen's brother as "an irresponsible person".¹⁴ The Secretary of the Johannesburg Group wrote to describe Klenerman's record of hostility to the movement and to exonerate Lee. A letter from J.R. Molefe, a member of the Committee of the African Metal Trades Union led by Lee and countersigned by ten other strikers describe Lee's splendid conduct on their behalf, and ended by saying that "our secretary R. Lee shall never be forgotten in our minds. Even today our members wished him back".¹⁵

The International Secretariat put an end to the matter, dismissing the slander as "a pure calumny, for which no-one wishes to take responsibility", censuring the Van Gelderen brothers and Starkey Jackson, and ordering the Militant Group to publish the letters exonerating Lee. But in the

interests of its policy of uniting the British groups the I.S. also condemned Lee for the split and for creating “a new minute independent, so-called ‘Trotskyist’ group, on a basis devoid of all political meaning”.¹⁶

Much ink has since been spilt to uphold the view that this was a purely personal affair, in no way justifying a split, founding a group that was sectarian and anti-internationalist.¹⁷ But a real principle was at stake. At that very moment Trotsky was defending himself in the Dewey Commission against the propaganda barrage of Stalinism, of which the Lee story was but a small part. Failure by the Trotskyists to confront these slanders could only do the gravest damage. As the musician Michael Tippett pointed out, the handling of the whole affair by the Militant Group had been “categorically un-Bolshevik and unpleasantly close to the methods of Stalinism”.¹⁸ And it was precisely such methods brought over by Harber and Jackson from the Militant Group into the new R.S.L. that poisoned its internal life and made it impossible for the organisation to build anything in the labour movement. As Trotsky often pointed out, such practices were a question of politics, which could lead to impotence and disintegration by focusing energies inwards, instead of towards the class. And in fact as soon as the new organisation cut its links with this atmosphere left over from the previous period of the movement it went from strength to strength, whereas the old groups stagnated and disintegrated.

The leadership of the old Militant Group condemned the split as having no political basis. “I am convinced that it was all pre-arranged”, noted Charlie Van Gelderen. “I think the split was a completely unjustifiable split. At that time they had no political differences. They said that they had no political differences. They split on an entirely personal basis”.¹⁹

But in fact, the split was a break with all previous practices and habits of work, from a propagandistic style to one of active intervention inside the labour movement. As Margaret Johns explained later:

“When I look back from a distance, I think that there was already a political difference between Lee, Haston, and that section, and Harber, Jackson and myself on the Executive Committee on developing the London Movement. There was a dispute over an anti-fascist leaflet (I wish we still had a copy of the leaflet). I know the West London Group had prepared a leaflet for distribution during one of the Fascist demonstrations and counter-demonstrations, and they were overruled by the Executive Committee, and naturally they were a bit upset by it. But it wasn’t the personal side that mattered: it did embody an attitude to work which I’m sure was part of the dispute. Altogether, they were very much moving towards the type of movement that developed later - that is, agitational work more than propaganda work. They were more inclined to go straight to the workers in general rather than to the workers via the organisations. We were still recruiting people who had already been recruited by

some other labour movement organisation: they were more prepared to go straight to the workers who didn't belong to anything - if you had a union card, then that was it".²⁰

Taking four of the branches of the Militant Group and a third of its members, the new body took the name of the 'Workers' International League'. It continued the policy of Labour Party entry alongside and competing with the Militant Group.²¹ To begin with it published a duplicated journal for Labour Party work in Paddington called the *Searchlight* with Gerry Healy as its editor. In December 1937 Ralph Lee obtained the debris of a printing press, even then eighty years old, and put it together to bring out the first copy of a theoretical journal, *Workers International News*. The press was so decrepit that it took 3 comrades to work it, but it did produce the magazine and several pamphlets before it finally gave up the ghost in Autumn 1939. In September 1938 the *Searchlight* was replaced by *Youth for Socialism*, a more general production intended for work in the Labour League of Youth, which was printed from February 1939 on. The W.I.L.'s press was already making an impact within six months, when the I.L.P. took up its warning of the plot to murder Trotsky.²²

Although the comrades of the new group lacked neither energy nor enthusiasm, and were almost wholly working class, with the exception of Lee himself, they had not much experience of work inside the labour movement. The variety of backgrounds - South Africa, the Y.C.L., the I.L.P., made it difficult for them to work together to form a homogeneous organisation. But instead of turning inwards upon themselves, as the other groups were doing, they set to work seriously inside the working class movement.

The first result of this was quite predictable - the recruitment of several of the younger and healthier elements of the official group who by this time had been long chafing at its inactivity and lack of drive. Liverpool had been a base for the Trotskyists for some time, where Albert Houghton, a founder member of the C.P.G.B., and Don James had long battled with the Stalinists, first of all in the I.L.P. and then in Kirkdale Labour Party. Along with Sammy Kossoff and Grainger they acted as 'elder statesmen' - dispensing advice at meetings whilst others were supposed to do the work. The Liverpool Trotskyists had clashed with the Harber and Jackson leadership on several previous occasions, when there had been threats of suspension and expulsion made. So when Gerry Healy came up in 1938 he recruited all the younger people into the W.I.L., the only really active workers like Jimmy Deane, Eric Brewer, Tommy Birchall and Harry Matthews.²³

Within the Labour Party, the main task was to prevent the Communist Party, which at this time was well to its right²⁴, from dragging the Labour Party into the Popular Front. As Ben Elsbury noted:

"Reactionary as the leadership of the huge Labour Party is, it has well

over a million members, and is well to the left of the British Communist Party which has now fallen on the neck of the discredited and visibly decaying Liberal Party (the traditional party of British Capitalism as opposed to the Conservative Party, which at first represented mainly the feudal and landed interests) in the sacred name of the Popular Front".²⁵

As opposed to Elsbury's own group, which tried to fight this policy from outside, the young W.I.L. members were obliged to fight it from within from the very first, against powerfully entrenched interests who were fellow-travelling the Communist Party for their own advancement. For example Jack and Bessie Braddock were already an institution in the Fairfield Labour Party, and completely dominated it at the time. As they were then working on behalf of the C.P., they put down a resolution supporting the Popular Front. Here was a challenge that could not be ignored, and Fred Bunby recalls how the Trotskyists were just as unscrupulous as the Braddocks at bringing people in - several of whom were not W.I.L. supporters along with four or five who were. But they put up such a fight that they succeeded in defeating the motion by a margin of a couple of votes. As this was the first check the Braddocks had ever experienced in the party Bessie was furious, and stormed at them at the end of the meeting - "Trotskyists, bastards". It had always been a foregone conclusion that any resolution they laid down would be passed. Such factional heat was engendered that when the W.I.L. comrades leafleted a public meeting of the Communist Party in Islington Square in Liverpool with the *Open Letter to C.P. Members* they were assaulted and the leaflets snatched from their hands.²⁶

In the Autumn came further gains from a short-term tactical turn into the I.L.P. Guild of Youth. In view of the fact that other Trotskyists had worked in the I.L.P. for many years with so few results, it was a surprising testimonial to the effectiveness of the new group. In a document submitted to the 'Unity and Peace' Conference the W.I.L. had argued that the I.L.P. was about to reaffiliate to the Labour Party, and they adopted "guerilla tactics" towards the I.L.P. "to hasten the process of differentiation which has already begun".²⁷ Rapid results followed when the Conference of the I.L.P. Guild of Youth meeting in November 1938 carried a resolution moved by Sam Bornstein on behalf of the East London Branch calling for affiliation to the Fourth International. Although its impact was not immediately apparent, it was about that time that Fred Jackson and Harold Atkinson joined the W.I.L., as did Tommy Reilly and his brother, who had come down to London from the Glasgow I.L.P. A little later a delegate to the Conference from Birmingham, Percy Downey, also joined the W.I.L. and a steady trickle of disillusioned I.L.P.ers were to follow him in the course of the next few years.²⁸

Although committed to Labour Party work, activity spilled over in all

directions. They turned up at every Communist Party meeting held to defend the Moscow Trials, and obtained the support of Sidney Silverman and other Labour M.P.s to condemn them. 'On two occasions they recruited the Paddington Y.C.L. into the W.I.L. almost to a man, and John Gollan, the National Secretary, was obliged to come down and re-establish the branch. They tried to get unity against Fascism, sometimes with little result, such as when they tried to mobilise against a Fascist Rally at Earls Court on July 16th, 1939, and found that they were the only opposition there, the Y.C.L. having found more pressing matters to occupy their time in a ramble in Epping Forest.'²⁹

Much of the W.I.L.'s success can be put down to a serious and painstaking attitude and a rejection of the amateurish methods that up to then had been typical of British Trotskyism. Solid advice along these lines came in a document written by Fred Jackson for the use of activists, on such things as how to spot a potential contact, how to approach him afterwards, how to work in the trade union branch and the Labour Party ward. In the unions advice was given on getting a firm grip on union business and taking a firm stance on local issues before developing the wider organisational and political questions. "100% revolutionary slogans" were to be avoided, because it was necessary "to carry on a dialogue with the workers in the factories, to find out exactly what they are thinking about the topics of the moment, and to concretise these vague, inarticulate aspirations into precisely - formulated programmes complete with slogans. We must point out the weaknesses and insufficiencies of such programmes, stage-by-stage counterposing the *Transitional Programme* to them; but we must not withhold our support for the genuine desire of the masses; we must play the leading part in the agitation for such demands".

After an assessment of the value of resolutions and slogans, the paper goes on to deal similarly with Labour Party work. In the same way it advises activists to lay down a solid basis by patient work in the locality - canvassing, membership and subscription drives, fund raising, etc. Again, the issues were to be explained in clear and simple terms, avoiding the use of technical Marxist language whilst escaping the trap of seeming to 'talk down' to the members, for "remember that as Marxists our duty is not to condemn but to understand....."³⁰

The exact orientation of the group in Labour Party terms is best summarised by an article over the signature of Gerry Healy, who made a real contribution at this time. "The main development of the political struggle", he wrote, "can only take place for the time being through the traditional political channel of the trade unions, that is, the Labour Party, no matter what form it may assume. The Labour Party is historically interlocked with the trade unions, and it is necessary, first of all, to raise the political education of the large mass of trade unionists who still vote Labour, in order to bring them to realise the bankruptcy of the Labour Party and trade union leaders. This cannot be accomplished by staying outside the

Labour Party. Every trade unionist must pay the political levy and attend his Labour Party branch meetings. The development of a genuine left wing in the trade unions must coincide and be co-ordinated with a corresponding left wing in the Labour Party. In this manner it will be possible, whilst operating around a revolutionary programme, to prepare an active opposition to the Labour Party and trade union leaders which in the coming struggle will rally all sections of the workers for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a Socialist Britain."

'LABOUR MUST TAKE COMPLETE POWER'³¹

By this time the main issue was without doubt the War. The Labour leaders and the Communists had already decided that it was a war to defend democracy, and were busy rediscovering the virtues of patriotism. The W.I.L. stated otherwise from the first. "A Popular Front Government would not change the nature of the War", they affirmed, "it would still be a war between two groups of imperialist bandits for the redivision of the world". As for democracy, "soon there will be little to choose between the regimes of Germany and England"³² and they expected a "rigid military dictatorship" to be "clamped on Britain immediately the war starts".³³

This assumption, based upon the experiences of the last war, was common to much of the Left at the time, and was an evident over-reaction. They obviously underestimated the need of the Government to appeal for support for the War as one of democracy against Fascism. Even after Labour entered the government it placed at least some limits on the amount of repression that could be directed against labour movement institutions, and the lack of influence of those who opposed the War prevented them from being the target of it, at least for the first few years. But at least the W.I.L. were correct when they pointed out that there is nothing that so much resembles one nation at war as another nation, also at war.

When War actually came the W.I.L. came out in *Youth for Socialism* with a banner headline of *Down With the War*,³³ and took careful precautions to ensure the functioning of its organisation under the conditions of illegality that they were expecting. Ajit Roy was sent on a tour of the branches to maintain contact with the leadership, and his account is so vivid that it is worth quoting at length:

"I remember when war broke out I was in the top executive of the party at the time. We expected that as soon as the War broke out we would all be arrested. We used to hold meetings, sometimes at my place, or under candlelight in some other places. It was all so secretive - now I know that secretiveness was wholly unnecessary, because the British government wasn't really worrying about us at that time.

I remember I was sent, shortly after the War broke out, from London to make contact with all our groups in the country. I went to Leeds, to Sheffield, to Manchester, Stockport, Newcastle, Glasgow,

Edinburgh, Carlisle, Liverpool and back to London. I take great pride in the fact that I was the first person to visit all our group immediately after the War broke out. Some of the experiences of that trip I shall never forget. I remember meeting a comrade in Cumberland - Carlisle - a person called Bryce, a railway worker - went to see him in his cabin in the railway yard. He took me to dinner at his place, saw me off on the night trip. It was freezing cold, the heating was off at the time, I believe. I don't know how I survived that night in that cold train. I went to Liverpool, I met Jimmy Deane's mother, who made a tremendous impression on me, and the young group in Liverpool. I met all kinds of people. I went to Sheffield, stayed at Carford's place. I attended the trades council meeting at Sheffield, made a speech as a delegate. I wonder that nobody questioned my credentials. It was a terrific speech about the iniquities of the British Empire, and how the War was fought, the division of the world between imperialist powers, and got a resolution through condemning the War itself. These were amazing experiences. Then I came back to London and I went into a big engineering factory, where I commenced serious work in the Amalgamated Engineering Union".³⁵

Back in London plans were being laid for illegal functioning, as Sam Levy also recalls:

"By 1939 we had about 40 members and had an old printing press in Jock Haston's place in Warwick Avenue, with the general membership meetings at Millie's place in Chichester Road. Most of the group was London-based, with a strong engineering group. There was an attempt to develop some of us younger comrades to be able to take over positions in the group due to the threat to the leadership in wartime.....

Before then³⁶ we had turned out a duplicated sheet called *A Worker's Diary* which was coming out for a few months almost daily to keep up connections with our periphery, when we were expecting repression at the beginning of the War. Tommy Reilly, John Williams, Jock Haston, Gerry Healy and George Nosedá went to Ireland at this time to establish plans for printing our paper and an alternative centre. The atmosphere was very uncertain at this time".³⁷

This Irish trip has become the subject of much legend in the Trotskyist movement since - of desertion, panic and collapse - that we are obliged to give it a prominence out of all proportion to its place, and again must recount it in the words of a witness:

"Well, there was Jack Haston, and Tommy Reilly, and Gerry Healy and a group of them came over. I believe they thought that their organisation would be banned during the War. Because they knew

the War was coming, and they were setting up an organisation there to get their paper in illegally into Britain. They worked for a while there. Some of them came back to Britain - I think Healy came back, and a chap called George Nosedá came back - but Haston and Reilly stayed for a while, and actually that's where the paper was printed - there - and they were getting it over here.

It was my first contact with Trotskyism. Haston and these people, they came into the labour movement, and they wielded a terrific influence. The whole thing was new to people, like, this Trotskyist position and so forth, and of course they made short work of the Stalinists while they were there. And that was my first connection with the Trotskyist movement - there was Haston, Tommy Reilly and these people. First when we met we were very young at the time, very raw..... There was a friend of mine, who was more politically advanced than I was, and he actually put them up in his place, a chap named Joe Noonan, who is dead now, and his mother took them in and looked after them while they were here".³⁸

These careful preparations to print and distribute the group's paper, the trouncing of the Stalinists and the recruitment of more cadres into the bargain bear little resemblance to the legend of panic and flight, as does their reception in the Irish movement. After a while they took up lodging at Howth outside Dublin with an ex I.L.P'er, Paddy Trench, who had served with the P.O.U.M. in the Spanish Civil War. As they were entrists in Britain, they decided that the logical place to work in Ireland was also in the Labour Party. As Jock Haston describes it:

"We made contact with the left wing of the Irish Labour Party in Dublin. Our principle contact was Nora Connolly O'Brien who was the daughter of Jim Connolly, and she was one of our best contacts then. She fed us when we were bloody hungry from time to time..... At the same time we made contact with the youngsters in the I.R.A. who were fairly active. In the Dublin I.R.A. the leadership tended to be right wing, but as the youngsters tended to be Socialist, Labour Party - orientated, we made contact with them, and won some of them over to the Trotskyist movement..... We met a member of the Socialist Party of Great Britain who, of course, adopted a pacifist attitude towards the War, and a lot of them went to Ireland. We also met Ethel Mannin and her husband Reg Reynolds: I personally met them two or three times in Phoenix Park, and on two or three occasions we discussed the question of setting up an illegal wireless station in the event of the I.L.P. and ourselves being banned".³⁹

Under the new name of *Socialist Appeal* they brought out three issues of a duplicated paper in Ireland, and sent back articles for *Youth for Socialism* and *Workers International News*, but it soon became clear that the W.I.L.

was much too small to attract repression from the authorities. Their work was no longer needed, and in April 1940 Jock Haston, the last of them, was recalled to Britain. As he had given his own papers to a comrade who should have been in the army, he travelled back under an assumed name, for which he was arrested in June 1941.

Plans went ahead to ensure the flow of the group's literature. *Workers International News* came out regularly, albeit in duplicated form, until it resumed the printed format in November 1940, in which it appeared for the rest of the War. *Youth for Socialism* came out regularly, and leaflets were issued as occasion demanded. Workers were urged to "Fight War Plans" and to defend the Soviet Union in the 'Winter War'. But the most amazing achievement was to initiate and sustain a daily bulletin from the outbreak of the War to the Summer of 1940. This *Workers Diary* was mostly Ralph Lee's work, and served the function of keeping political contact between the centre, the provincial groups, and the outside periphery. It took in the broad sweep of the War from Finland to India, and analysed events at an extraordinary level; its review of the 'Phony War', for example, must rank among the finest pieces of Marxist analysis ever written.⁴⁰

In 1940 arose a serious crisis which threatened the functioning of the group. A problem the W.I.L. shared with other socialists was that many of its members were young and liable for call-up, to the extent that it threatened to paralyse activity; and while the W.I.L. was not pacifist, and its policy was that its members, if conscripted, should "go where the workers were", some comrades felt that attempts should be made to preserve certain key individuals. Up in Sheffield Arthur Carford, an old militant, a founder member of the C.P. and a known Trotskyist sympathiser had, incredibly, secured a job as an orderly in the Medical Examination Centre where potential conscripts were examined for fitness prior to call-up. The Sheffield group agreed that Carford should remove small quantities of Medical Grade Cards from his workplace and arrange their transfer to London, with a view to having them forged so that the individual bearer would appear to be classed as unfit for military service. The police had a policy at this time of making indiscriminate raids on pubs, cafés, etc., looking for deserters and people without Identity Cards.

When this was discovered - as in wartime conditions it was bound to be - Beet, Carford, Jackson and Ward were arrested and charged at Sheffield Magistrates' Court, initially with stealing, receiving, conspiring to steal, and conspiring to receive these cards - amounting to four charges against each. They were remanded in custody pending the next Leeds Assizes. In the meantime a fifth charge was added, that the accused did these things "with intent to assist the enemy". This last charge put the comrades in a very sticky position indeed, bearing as it did a maximum sentence of twenty years. More importantly, a conviction on this charge would have given the Stalinists a propaganda field-day, and the police a tremendous opportunity for harassment of the group.

At the trial at Leeds Assizes on December 16th, 1940 Jackson, unlike the other three, realising that there was no chance of securing acquittal on the first four charges, and having no confidence in the ability of the legal 'luminaries' engaged by the others to rebut the fifth charge, decided to defend himself. Acknowledging that in British law there is no such thing as a political offence, he nevertheless asked the jury, for the purposes of his defence, to distinguish between the first four charges as 'criminal' and the fifth as 'political'. In a speech lasting about an hour and a quarter he ranged over the whole history of the International Socialist Movement, starting with the formation of the First International and ending with the formation of the Fourth. He dealt in detail with the split from the Stalinist Third International, which had been precipitated precisely by the Stalinists' betrayal of the anti-Nazi struggle in Germany, aided and abetted, of course, by the leaders of the Second International. At the same time he defended his activities as stemming from a political opposition to the Imperialist War on a Socialist and Internationalist basis. He succeeded in convincing the jury that it was quite impossible for a Trotskyist to do *anything*, deliberately, to assist Fascism in general or Nazi Germany in particular, and they were so impressed that they returned guilty verdicts on the minor charges only. Jackson, as "leader of the conspiracy", according to the judge, got two years, Carford eighteen months, Ward six months, and Beet, by a curious quirk, was acquitted. By taking the responsibility for this defence upon himself Jackson drew the heaviest sentence, but by making the proper political defence he protected the W.I.L. from possibly serious consequences, and deprived the Stalinists of an opportunity for more slander.

Perhaps it could be added that the whole affair was a piece of adventurism that should never have happened - certainly that was the view of the organisation.⁴¹

Although the W.I.L.'s growth was quite slow during this period, it was a time in which the leadership team was tried and tested, and the change from peacetime propaganda to agitation under war conditions was successfully made. Invaluable in this context was the military policy provided by the International Movement. Already in the *Transitional Programme* Trotsky had shown that it was necessary to prepare for the working class a reply to militarism on the one hand and to pacifism on the other. When workers accepted the necessity for conscription and arms training, it was necessary to prepare for the workers' own army in a transitional form by arguing for "military training and arming of workers and farmers under direct control of workers' and farmers' committees", the "creation of military schools for the training of commanders among the toilers, chosen by workers' organisations" and "the substitution for the standing army of a people's militia".⁴² To counter the argument of the bourgeoisie that it was defending democracy against Fascism, and at the same time to build up the workers' militia as an organ of dual power, it was necessary to demand that the state

“give the workers the opportunity to master military technique” by getting “military training at their factories, plants and mines”.⁴³ “We cannot escape from the militarisation” he wrote, “but inside the machine we can observe the class line”.⁴⁴ The policy came to be known as the ‘American (or proletarian) Military Policy’ after James Cannon secured support for it from the American S.W.P. at its conference in September 1940. In the same way as socialists oppose capitalism, he argued but “go into factories and try by working with the class to influence its development”, so it was necessary to raise the revolutionary programme in the army, and call for compulsory military training for the workers, and trade union support for this principle.⁴⁵

The W.I.L., of course, had opposed the War from the first. “Let them call it a democratic war, a fight against fascism - we know that the enemy is in our own country”⁴⁶ ran an early statement, issued along with another attacking “the patriotic ‘Labour’ and Communist leaders who try to palm off on us a war for profit as a war for ‘democracy’ ”.⁴⁷ Having already condemned the pacifism of the I.L.P. in a pamphlet issued at the start of the War,⁴⁸ the W.I.L. found it easy to accept the American Military policy as soon as it became known. Already by December 1940 Andrew Paton (Andy Scott) was writing in *Youth for Socialism*:

“No worker in this country wants to come under the bloody tyranny of Hitler. On the contrary, he will fight against this with all his strength. But he cannot do this while Britain is capitalist; while India is in bondage; while the capitalist class controls the army and the workers are unarmed.

The defeat of Hitler, the defence of Britain, the ending of the War - these are not simply a matter of superior arms or more numerous arms. More important is who wields the arms and for what. If it is militant workers fighting for Socialism they will, besides the weapons they take out of the hands of the capitalists have one supreme weapon which Hitler cannot fight - the fact that the German workers can now join them in the fight against Hitler free from the fear of British capitalism waiting to pounce on them”.⁴⁹

The W.I.L. adopted the military policy wholeheartedly. A whole issue of their journal reprinted Cannon’s speech about it,⁵⁰ and his testimony at the Minneapolis Trial of November 1941, repeating the same ideas, went through two print runs of over a thousand copies each in a special pamphlet entitled *The Case for Socialist Revolution: ABC of Trotskyism*.⁵¹

Although the W.I.L. accepted the policy, it was not without conflict, and there was always the problem of its precise application to the British situation. Any advance of the movement is attended by a crisis of theory, since class conflict is transmitted into working class organisations in the form of factional struggles. That the W.I.L. emerged from this without a split - in marked contrast with the official group - testifies to the growing

maturity of the organisation. By now Ralph Lee, suffering from the effects of the climate, had returned to South Africa,⁵² and the conflict took place between groups within the new leadership. Jock Haston, Millie Lee and Sam Levy occupied a minority position over against Ted Grant and Gerry Healy.

Millie Lee and Sam Levy objected to the tone in which the policy had appeared in *Youth for Socialism*, claiming that it had been given a defencist twist by putting all the weight on the reluctance of the bourgeoisie to arm the workers.

A policy intended to supply weapons to the workers against their own bourgeoisie had been turned into a way of fighting Hitler when the ruling class seemed reluctant to do so. Jock Haston claimed that the Majority's position was "for a revolutionary war against Hitler", and made concessions to defencism. They had tried to approach the 'Peoples' Convention'⁵³ with the slogan of "How Really to Fight Hitler", until objections raised by the Minority got this changed to "A Fighting Alternative for the Working Class". A similar objection had prevented them from arguing that the Stalinists had no policy to fight Hitler. But the size of the Communist vote in the Dumbartonshire by-election showed that the mood of the advanced sections of the working class was more anti-war than it had been in 1939. Haston was especially anxious not to get the slogan of 'Arm the Workers' mixed up with the Home Guard, which had already turned out a Branch Chairman and Shop Steward from Ruislip Running Sheds, armed with loaded revolvers and bayonnetted rifles. To avoid any such confusion, he argued, the slogan of 'Arm the Workers' must be given concrete content, from trade union rights and wages in the forces to full democratic and political rights for soldiers, election of officers, and "the right of the soldiers in the armed forces to give training in arms to workers in the trade unions and labour organisations".⁵⁴

Healy's reply for the Majority repudiated the charge of defencism, and pointed out that dismissing the Home Guard as "armed strike breakers", pure and simple, did not help to dissolve it on class lines by discussion with the misguided workers who had joined it. A great deal of working class discontent about time wasting and misuse of craftsmen and materials arose from the suspicion that the bourgeoisie was not prosecuting the War "against Nazism" to the utmost. Many trade unionists had joined the Home Guard acutely suspicious of the bourgeoisie, an attitude it was necessary to change into revolutionary consciousness.⁵⁵

The discussion went on for a few months and finally resolved itself at a Conference in a resolution incorporating the strengths of both views. It repudiated the argument that the War was of democracy and Fascism, rejecting defencism. It accepted the military programme "which bases itself on war as the characteristic feature of the present epoch, and takes this as a starting point for practical actions, which must lead to a taking of power and transforming the War into a genuine struggle for the liberation of the

peoples of Europe and the world from Hitler or any other form of oppression". But it took account of working class attitudes to the War, since "the unending chaos and incompetence of the capitalist class both in the industrial and military spheres has caused a highly critical mood to spring up among the masses. This mood has not been at all for 'peace' with Hitler. It has on the contrary been aimed towards a more rigorous and different sort of prosecution of the War". This is where the Military Policy came in - "to organise the workers on their own class base within the military machine. It must simultaneously seek to organise the workers into independent proletarian military organisations, controlled and officered by the working class and by workers' organisations". The full range of Haston's concrete demands was incorporated along with others, such as the abolition of the privileges of the officer caste and the military regulations that gave them the power of life and death over the men. On the main issue, the Home Guard, it demanded its dissolution into the workers' militia.⁵⁶

The whole dispute had died down in a month, as the group got caught up in carrying out the policy inside the labour movement. The debate marked a new stage in the development of Trotskyism in Britain for a number of reasons. It had ranged over concrete issues throughout, and had never dissolved into an encounter between abstractions; it had taken place in a comradely atmosphere; the group had been immeasurably strengthened; and to our knowledge it was the first debate over principle in the British movement that had not resulted in a debilitating split.

The concrete effects were immediate and salutary. As a by no means uncritical observer wrote:

"The W.I.L. took up the question without a conscience in relation to defencism. They argued that Hitler's planes were raining down bombs and it was important to make a response to this; the workers had responded - they demanded deep air-raid shelters. They had to act in a fashion which was not chauvinist but was decisively in the interests of the defence of the proletariat. They had to act in a fashion such as to immediately raise the question of the War and the prevailing government, not in an ultimatum but in a transitional fashion. So they campaigned around the underground shelters which already existed - the London Tube - and advised people to break open the gates of the stations (which closed at 11p.m.) and to occupy them as deep air raid shelters. The people were only too happy to follow this advice and the Stalinists embarrassedly followed suit, advocating improved facilities. The W.I.L comrades went down into the deep air raid shelters to discuss and argue with the people. It was class actions of this sort that were important....."⁵⁷

Relations with the Communist Party still posed an important problem, for its strong industrial apparatus placed a barrier between the W.I.L. and the working class. As late as the end of September 1939 the C.P. was still

supporting the War, and J.R. Campbell continued to complain that the "Trotskyist allies of Fascism" were "carrying on effective propaganda for Hitler" by arguing that "the workers of a country which is menaced by external Fascism have no interest in defending that country".⁵⁸

However, the sudden change of line involving his personal humiliation toned down the nature of these attacks, if it did not alter their basic dishonesty.⁵⁹ The fact that the C.P.G.B. was now advertising Hitler's peace appeal, and the French Communist Party was applying to the Nazi administration in Paris for the legalisation of its newspaper⁶⁰ did not prevent him from describing Trotsky as a "Quisling" and a "Fascist vassal" who wrote "syndicated articles" for the "Fascist Press".⁶¹ But the direct attacks of the Stalinists upon the movement here were toned down for a while, as the C.P. itself was by now utterly isolated, and could not afford to alienate anyone by sectarian attacks.⁶² Especially when they were anxious to draw in as many allies as possible for the 'People's Convention' - an attempt to float yet another Popular Front, this time dedicated to peace.⁶³ In spite of the fact that this was "much against the feelings of the majority of trade union members", who were "quite bored with it",⁶⁴ the W.I.L. realised that it must intervene, as the Communist Party was an important part of the labour movement, especially amongst those who opposed the War.

Attending a meeting of this 'People's Convention' in the Royal Hotel on March 16th, W.I.L. comrades submitted an amendment to the main resolution from Willesden no. 2 branch of the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers and Southall N.U.R. that "only the Socialist Revolution and the securing of power by the working class can solve the problem with which the people are faced" demanding that Labour should take power, the working class should be armed, the economy should be nationalised, the colonies freed, and a class appeal should be made to the German and Italian workers.⁶⁵ Ted Bramley rejected the amendment because it would only drive away the 'Progressive' elements "who were prepared to travel along with us on the People's Convention Programme". Since the amendment picked up only 4 votes out of the 882 delegates present, the Communists were able to delete the whole section dealing with the debate from the published report, and relegate it to a duplicated pamphlet, obtainable only if you were prepared to write in for it. "The Convention is sectarian", concluded W.I.L., "because it refuses to base itself on the consciousness and mood of the masses, which at the present time is one of supporting the Labour leaders, despite the fact that they are in the government and claiming that this is necessary because of the needs of a 'war against Hitlerism'. It refuses to expose this by demanding that they take power on the programme of demands put forward in the amendment".⁶⁶

As always, the slogan of the Labour government remained central and strategic. Yet opportunities for concrete work inside the Labour Party were fast disappearing. Many of its activists were in the forces, others were deeply involved in war work and overtime, activity was dwindling to nothing

and wards just failed to meet for months on end. Whilst the Labour Party was in government they adhered to a no-contest pact when by-elections came up, so even the electoral side of political activity was held in frozen suspension. The main battle ground was plainly in the trade unions.

Already the W.I.L. was laying down the basis for a successful intervention. The first signs of real trouble began with a strike of 1,600 miners at the Betteshanger pit in January 1941. As the Kent coalfield is one of the smallest, the authorities were hoping they could be easily intimidated, and fined over a thousand strikers and jailed three union branch officials. This only increased the men's determination and they resolved to stay out until their officials were released - which finally took place in circumstances where negotiations had to be opened up in the cells. Jock Haston describes his adventures there:

"I went to Betteshanger. We published, as you know, a fairly good article on the Betteshanger strike, and I went down to the pit, and sold it in Deal, where most of the Betteshanger miners lived, and at the pit head. When the Betteshanger leaders were tried, I went down to the court. I was taken out of the court by the Chief Constable of Kent, who drove me up to the next township, Maidstone, and then drove me some miles out of Kent, towards London, dumped me out of his car, and said that if I ever came near the area again he would arrest me under 18B. But I was in the courthouse before he was, because I got a lift almost immediately back in. So when he turned up in the courthouse I was already there, but in fact he took no action. But we made some very good contacts out of that strike, and in fact we had a group of Betteshanger miners - a Welsh miner called Green was the one name I recall from that group. But we had quite a group of people in that pit".⁶⁷

Notes

1. Preface to a collection of documents on R.S.L./W.I.L. relations (undated), pp. 1-2.
2. Minutes of the National Conference of the Militant Group, 1st and 2nd August, 1937, p.6.
3. Statement of C.V.G., 11th November, 1937, Annexe to the G.M.M. Minutes, 14th November, 1937.
4. Millie Lee, Letter to Potter (W.I.L. contact in Oxford), 7th January, 1942.
5. Minutes of the London General Membership Meeting, Militant Group, 14th November, 1937.
6. E.C. Minutes, Militant Group, 20th November, 1937.
7. Ralph Lee, Letter of 27th November, 1937; Jock Haston, Letter of 12th December, 1937; Dick Frieslich, Letter of 10th December, 1937.
8. Ted Grant, Letter of 12th December, 1937.

9. Ralph Lee, Letter of 27th November, 1937.
10. Jock Haston, Letter of 11th December, 1937.
11. Letter of the Militant Group, 30th December, 1937.
12. Apparently the wife of Frank Glass, who played an important role in the Chinese Trotskyist movement under the pseudonym of Li Fu-Jen. Charles Van Gelderen, Interview with Al Richardson, 4th October, 1979; c.f. Wang Fan-Hsi, *Chinese Revolutionary*, Oxford, 1980, pp. 171-2, 174-5, 177, 185.
13. F. Klenerman, Letter of 12th January, 1938.
14. P. Kostan, Letter of 25th January, 1938.
15. M. Sappire, Letter of 21st February, 1938; J.R. Molefe, *ibid*.
16. Resolution of the International Secretariat on the R.L. Affair, May, 1938.
17. C.f. M & J Archer, 'Notes on Healy's Role in the Early Days of the British Trotskyist Movement', in Wohlforth (ed.), *Healy's Big Lie*, New York, 1976, pp. 30-33.
18. Michael Tippet, Letter of 8th January, 1938
19. C. Van Gelderen, Interview with Al Richardson, 4th October, 1979.
20. Margaret Johns, Interview with Al Richardson, 4th March, 1978.
21. The question of entry was not, in fact, an issue to begin with, as is stated for example by A. Jones in 'The Rise of Gerry Healy', in 'Battle for Ideas', no. 1, *Red Weekly*, October, 1975.
22. 'To Murder Trotsky?', in *Controversy*, June 1938 (inside front cover).
23. Fred Bunby, conversation with Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, 29th October, 1977.
24. Those third period commentators who objected to our analysis of this phenomenon in 'Two Steps Back', missed in the heat of their polemic that this was precisely the view of L.D. Trotsky himself. Compare L.D. Trotsky, 'Hitler and Stalin', 6th March, 1939, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky 1938-9*, New York, 1974, p. 202, with W. Hunter, 'Handraisers for the Bureaucracy', in *Labour Review*, January 1983, pp. 44-5, and 'An Exchange on British Trotskyism' in *Workers Hammer*, October 1984, p.2. Since the organisation to which the former writer belongs actually includes the above passage in one of its highly selective editions of Trotsky's works (*Writings on Britain*, vol iii, London 1974, p.152) we can only conclude that they do not read their own scriptures.
25. A.B. Elsbury, 'A Letter from England', in *Socialist Appeal* (U.S.A.), 16th July, 1938.
26. Fred Bunby, Conversation with Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, 29th October, 1979. When the Braddocks had shifted their political allegiance in later years, their hostility to Trotskyism remained. C.f. J. and B. Braddock *The Braddocks*, London, 1963, pp. 228-32.
27. 'Contribution by Workers International League to the Discussion on the Tasks of Bolshevik-Leninists in Britain', pp. 5-6.
28. *Youth for Socialism*, vol. i, no. 4, December 1938; *New Leader*, vol. xxxi, new series no. 255, 2nd December, 1938, p.6. Other resolutions for co-operation with the W.I.L. in producing a paper for the Labour League of Youth and for affiliation to the Labour Party put down at the same time failed to gain support.
29. *To Earls Court: Rally Against Fascism* (W.I.L. Leaflet).
30. F.J., 'How to Work in the Mass Movement', W.I.L. internal document (undated, but to be assigned to 1939).
31. G.H., 'Lessons of the Clyde: Remove Traitor T.U. Leaders', in *Youth for Socialism*, vol. iii, no. 3, December 1940, p.4.
32. 'Open Letter to Communist Party Members' published by *Workers International News* (undated, but to be placed between September 1938 and August 1939 on internal evidence).
33. Unsigned article, 'The Irish Revolution has Begun', in *Workers International News*, vol. ii, no. 8, August 1939, p.3.
34. E.G. (Ted Grant), 'Down With the War', in *Youth for Socialism*, vol. ii, no. 1, September, 1939.
35. Ajit Roy, Tape Recording made for Sam Bornstein, November, 1975.
36. i.e. 1941.
37. i.e., of the 'Phony War'. Sam Levy, Interview with Al Richardson, 7th April, 1974.
38. Johnny Byrne, Interview with Al Richardson, August, 1976.

39. Jock Haston, Interview with Al Richardson, 30th April, 1978.
40. *Workers Diary*, vol. i, no. 33, 21st November, 1939.
41. The group naturally regarded Jackson's actions as highly irresponsible, but in view of his conduct in the dock, and his refusal to implicate the organisation by giving a statement to the police, he was merely debarred from holding office in the W.I.L. for a year. Carford was reduced to sympathiser status, and Beet and Ward, who had implicated the group by giving dangerous statements to the police, were expelled. (E.C. Report of the W.I.L., 22nd April, 1942). On its part the R.S.L. issued a statement that "their organisation is not a part of the Fourth International", and that "any statements that may be made regarding the affiliation of these workers with the Fourth International are therefore completely baseless". (E.C. Circular for printing in *The Bulletin* and *Youth Militant*, 28th October, 1940).
42. 'Transitional Programme', in *Documents of the Fourth International: The Formative Years*, New York, 1973, p. 199.
43. L.D. Trotsky, 'On the Question of Workers' Self-Defence' (unpublished paper), 25th October, 1939, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1939-40*, New York 1973, pp. 333.
44. L.D. Trotsky, 'American Problems', 7th August 1940; op. cit., p.333.
45. J.P. Cannon, 'Military Policy of the Proletariat', in *Workers International News*, vol. iv, no. 1. (entire issue), January, 1941. C.f. also his statement at the Minneapolis Trial, in *Socialism on Trial*, New York, 1942, pp. 54-7.
46. 'Youth and War', in *Youth for Socialism*, vol. i, no. i, September, 1938, p.7.
47. *Fight War Plans*, W.I.L. leaflet (undated, but to be assigned to September 1938 on internal evidence).
48. A W.I.L. er, *Can Pacifism Bring Peace?*, W.I.L. pamphlet (undated, but written in 1939), p.6.
49. A.P., 'The War Extends', in *Youth for Socialism*, vol. iii, no. 3, December, 1940, p.4.
50. *Workers International News*, vol. iv, no. 1, January, 1941.
51. Special issue of *Workers International News*, vol. v, nos. 1 & 2, Nov. 1942.
52. According to Haston, Lee was the only member of the W.I.L. group to support Shachtman on the Soviet Question. After returning to South Africa he formed a small group that functioned for a few years, but became disillusioned, and later committed suicide.
53. C.f. Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back*, London, 1982, pp. 71-2. Jock Haston, 'A Step Towards Capitulation', Internal Bulletin of the W.I.L., 21st March, 1941.
54. J. Haston, 'The Military Policy as Applied to the Home Guard', Internal Bulletin of the W.I.L., 27th April, 1941, pp. 7,9,17 etc.
55. G. Healy, 'The Home Guard: An Approach', Internal Bulletin of the W.I.L., 19th May, 1941, pp. 3, 9-10, etc.
56. 'Resolution on Military Policy', pp. 2, 4-5, etc (our emphasis).
57. Anonymous (Brian Biggins), *The Fourth International: A History of Bolshevism 1918 - 1948*, Glasgow (undated), p.24. For the origins of the highly successful W.I.L. air raid shelter policy described, c.f. 'K.M.', 'For a New Course', W.I.L. Internal Document 26th October, 1940, pp.5-6.
58. J.R. Campbell, 'Britain and the History of the C.P.S.U.', in *World News and Views*, vol. xix, no. 12, 18th March, 1939, p. 236.
59. C.f. Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back*, London, 1982, pp. 63-5.
60. Whilst Trotsky's books were being removed from libraries and booksellers.
61. J.R. Campbell, 'A Counter-Revolutionary Gangster Passes', in *The Daily Worker*, 23rd August, 1940.
62. Op. cit., n. 59 above, p.78.
63. Op. cit., pp. 71-2.
64. Dave Granick, Interview with Sam Bornstein, June, 1972.
65. Norah C. Brown, Letter in 'A Workers' Government - Not a People's Convention', in *Youth for Socialism*, vol. iii, no. 7, April, 1941, p.2.
66. Ibid.
67. Jock Haston, Interview with Al Richardson, 30th April, 1978.

Chapter Two

Unity and Disintegration: The R.S.L. 1938 - 1943

By now there were three groups supporting the Trotskyist position in Britain - the Militant Group, the R.S.L. and the W.I.L. Before long they were joined by another from a totally separate origin, the R.S.P.

Among the oldest international socialist groupings is the De Leonist ('Socialist Labour Party') movement. Its founder, the American Marxist, Daniel de Leon (1852 - 1914) was one of the few since Marx to contribute a new concept to the arsenal of Marxism, anticipating the Soviet form of social organisation, as Lenin himself admitted,¹ and contributing to the understanding of the part played by the labour bureaucracy in the class struggle.² His work had produced a string of rather fundamentalist Marxist sects in other countries, particularly the one formed in the Scottish lowlands in 1904. When the C.P.G.B. had been formed it lost the greater part of its members, but a small group of perhaps 200 old workers maintained their independence, putting out the abstract propaganda that had been so typical of the Marxist movement in this country in the years before the First World War.

Quite without any contact with the British Trotskyists or the International movement a small group of between 15 and 20 members had become attracted to the Trotskyist case by reading criticisms of the Popular Front politics of Stalinism. Led by an ex-soldier and working class militant of great personal courage, Tommy Tait, his son Willie and Aspinall, they were shortly afterwards joined by Frank Maitland from the I.L.P and Pat McVeigh, entering politics for the first time. Their main activity was holding regular open air Sunday meetings at 'the Mound' in Edinburgh, where several hundred workers collected to listen, and up to 250 copies of the paper, *The Revolutionary Socialist* were sold. "Our propaganda we know was carried into the factories", remembers Maitland, "because we got it coming back to us. They were certainly paying attention to what we were saying".³

A letter to Trotsky elicited a warm response,⁴ and Charles Sumner, the

British representative on the I.S. was instructed to get the British groups to make contact with them.⁵ By August 1938 Maitland was already writing for *Fight*, the organ of the newly formed R.S.L.

As the War came on rapidly Trotsky became all the more anxious to form the Fourth International, a new Zimmerwald for internationalists with a coherent programme and a united structure.⁶ This meant proper sections in each country, and Cannon in particular wanted "an end to our negotiations and manoeuvres with the centrists", so that "those who lightly make splits must be chopped off and cast aside".⁷ An obvious priority was Britain, and Cannon and Shachtman were sent here, with a week "to help the crystallisation of a genuine British Section".⁸

After meeting with the various groups separately, and even individuals who had dropped out long ago,⁹ Cannon called a conference in South London at the beginning of August 1938, and presented a 'Peace and Unity Agreement' for them to sign. As the W.I.L. described it:

"In the Bulletin circulated for pre-conference discussion, there were three theses submitted for discussion by the W.I.L. and the R.S.L. and the R.S.P. The conference was attended by representatives of these three groups, as well as by a representative of the Militant Group. At the conference the 'Peace and Unity Agreement' was drawn up and presented by the American comrade. There was no political discussion on the difference of tactics and perspectives for Britain which separated the groups for years. Only the 'Peace and Unity Agreement' which the groups were given twenty minutes to sign. All the groups signed except W.I.L." ¹⁰

The W.I.L. view was that agreement on international perspectives was not alone sufficient to forge an organised grouping out of the factions involved and that allowing the members to pick and choose what orientation to follow at will could not create a democratic centralist and disciplined group. As Haston recalls:

"It seemed to us that it was imperative that if we were going to unite the groups, at least we had to unite on a common programme, and we weren't satisfied, out of the fairly lengthy discussions that we had that this was the unification which would keep these people together - keep us together - in one single organisation, and we decided not to take part in the unity. The overwhelming bulk of the time that we spent at that conference was devoted to an exposition of the document *The Transitional Programme of the Fourth International*. We spent practically no time at all in discussing what were the differences between the British Trotskyists, and what common bases could we actually fuse on. The argument of the Americans was that we could fuse on *The Transitional Programme of the Fourth International*, and we took the view that that wouldn't work - it

wouldn't keep the organisation together..... Nathan Gould..... was the principal spokesman..... on the *Transitional Programme of the Fourth International* at the Unity Conference - he was the one who spoke on the documents. All he did, in practice, was virtually to read it. There was no analysis of how that programme would affect Britain.

We didn't need that speech. He was a brilliant young speaker, but we didn't need that speech - we had read the documents".¹¹

The new organisation took as its public name that of the old 'Revolutionary Socialist League' of Wicks, C.L.R. James, Duncan and Lane. It proposed to form a theoretical magazine by fusing together the existing *Fight* of the old R.S.L. and the *Revolutionary Socialist* of the R.S.P., bringing it out under a separate publishing name to safeguard the entry section. The agitational paper was to continue to be the Harber Group's *Militant*, the arm of operation within the Labour Party being the 'Militant Labour League', a continuation of the previous entry work of the Harber/Starkey Jackson organisation. Guarantees against factional manoeuvring were built into the new Executive, on which seats were allotted on the basis of the supposed membership size of previous groups (5 each for the old R.S.L. and Militant Group, and 2 for the R.S.P.). The main point - the political basis for unity - was left to a very sloppy formulation, that "the main emphasis in the next period is to be placed on work within the Labour Party", but that "members at present devoting their full activity to propaganda work outside the Labour party are not required to join it".¹²

Right from the outset, therefore, the unity created was more apparent than real. There was no basis for united action, two mutually exclusive tactics were being pursued, and "an error was made in allowing a minority to have rights outside the organisation".¹³ For the Militant Group, as ever, was committed to entry; the old R.S.L. comrades argued in an empirical fashion for the "organisational independence of the revolutionary grouping", and claimed that "large sections of workers" did not share "the Labour Party fetishism which characterises certain elements of the Trotskyist movement",¹⁴ and the old R.S.P. was totally against entry on principle. As Maitland remembers:

"When the business came up about unification, James P. Cannon was sent over to iron things out. First of all he came to Edinburgh and spoke to us on our position. I'm sorry to say we fell foul of each other because we were always strongly anti-Labour Party. I myself considered Trotsky was wrong - I still consider Trotsky was wrong. I think he torpedoed the Fourth International by his policy of entering into Social Democracy. My argument was that this was going back - rolling back history to pre-1917.

Join the Communist Party - yes - work inside the Communist Party, but to go back and join the old Social Democratic Parties was ridiculous from an historic point of view. Secondly, I thought it was

morally unjustifiable because I can't see that you can be a member of any political party, accept the constitution - which is a political thing - and its rules and all the rest of it and preach something else. I think the workers just don't like it - they turn away from that - the honest workers turn away from that.....

However, Cannon really wasn't concerned about the argument. All he was concerned about was unifying the organisations. All these arguments were skipped over really, and we - who were also keen on getting things done from a practical point of view - we never raised these arguments either at the Unity Conference. All this was an argument in Edinburgh".¹⁵

The W.I.L., however, refused to endorse the unity document, despite the utmost pressure on them to come into line. Cannon several times addressed them; when Shachtman also arrived he stressed the importance of entering the British Section; the E.C. of the R.S.L. made a further appeal on the same lines after the foundation of the Fourth International - all to no avail. "The new Revolutionary Socialist League is founded on a compromise with sectarianism", they maintained, "and arising out of the political compromise is naturally a dual organisational structure. The membership is left free to decide, each for himself, the milieu of work; the principle of centralism is thrown overboard, and with it any pretence of democratic discipline. In effect, the new R.S.L. consists of two organisations masquerading under a single name, a state of affairs that cannot be hidden from the outside world, even if internal friction is sufficiently overcome to enable the organisation to function".¹⁶ And had not Engels, long ago, warned against the danger that the cry for 'unity' would "stir up everything together into one nondescript brew, which, the moment it is left to settle, throws up the differences again in much more acute opposition because they are now all together in one pot?"¹⁷

Before this scotch-tape unity could be put to any sort of test the founding conference of the Fourth International took place in Paris on September 3rd, 1938. Charles Sumner took the minutes, and C.L.R. James and Willie Tait went over a week earlier and took part in some sort of preliminary discussions. Denzil Harber and Charles Van Gelderen came over later, but due to a slip up arrived late and missed the main political discussion. As Van Gelderen remembers:

"The South African comrades knew that the conference was to take place. I wasn't to be there, but they said 'if we send you the fare, will you go and represent us at the conference?', they gave me ten pounds which was enough for the week in Paris.....

I think we missed the first session of the conference. What happened was that we hadn't an address to go to. We had Klement's address and, of course, Klement wasn't there. Harber had the address of the French Section, so we went there first and found out where the

conference was taking place. By the time we arrived the conference was already in session.

Then they decided that they couldn't seat me as a delegate, only as an observer, as I didn't represent a section. They could not decide that I represented a section. It was quite justifiable, really.....

I suppose it was attended by forty countries in one way or another. Pablo was there, representing the Greek Section. I remember Naville there and Rousset, who is now almost a deputy, but his son is in the International. Naville had to take over the secretaryship at the last minute. The organisation was very haphazard. In the report of the conference, which is put down wrongly, it says it was taking place in Rosmer's House. It took place in a small room near the Gare du Nord. The name of the road was the Rue de St. Église. The road is still there. I checked on it the last time I was in Paris".¹⁸

The roll-call of the sizes of the national sections at the conference put the size of the British R.S.L. at the optimistic figure of 170, slightly in excess of the full paper membership claimed by all the groups that had signed the 'Peace and Unity Agreement'¹⁹ Harber and C.L.R. James were elected to represent Britain on the International Executive Committee, though James was shortly to be transferred to the U.S.A. to help the work of the S.W.P. among the black population.²⁰

Critics from the old R.S.L. were of the opinion that this was a move to ensure the stability of the new British Section by removing Harber's long standing antagonist. Shortly after arriving in the U.S.A. James joined the split of Max Shachtman from the Trotskyist movement.

The W.I.L. did not refuse to attend (as is so often stated), but being a group of 30 young workers, many of then unemployed, they could not afford to send a delegate. So they sent along a statement in a sealed envelope by the hand of Denzil Harber, accepting the authority of the conference and requesting official recognition, or failing that, "if the new congress..... accepts the new Revolutionary Socialist League as the official British Section of the Fourth International, then the Workers International League has no recourse but to request that it be accepted as a body sympathetically affiliated to the Fourth International". "The real bond that unites the national sections in the Fourth International", they observed "is, of course, the common programme which determines the activity of each section; the W.I.L. embraces the fundamentals of this common programme and thereby establishes its claim to affiliation as an entrust group".²¹

The existing minutes are not full enough to reconstruct the discussion that took place in the British Commission. Harber absented himself "because he said he couldn't take an objective position on the Lee Report",²² but after the reading of the W.I.L. statement it appears that Willie Tait launched into a "vicious attack" upon the W.I.L.,²³ and the Belgian delegate, Leon Lesoil, also took a hostile view, because he alleged

that the W.I.L. had been in contact with Molinier in trying to float a parallel conference.²⁴ But the decisive influence appears to have been James P. Cannon:

“Cannon had been very impressed with the W.I.L. organisation, and there was a chap called Nathan Gould, and he told us privately that of all the organisations that Cannon had seen, the one that impressed him most was the W.I.L. He was impressed with the organisation, and their attitudes. He was impressed with the name of the paper, and the name of the organisation - W.I.L. - W.I.N. Cannon had an organisational mind, not a theoretical mind, and this impressed him considerably. I think he would have done anything to get them into the united organisation. But Cannon was also the type of man that once you thwarted him, he was very hard to change. It was my conviction that it was Cannon who took this strong line”.²⁵

The condemnation of the W.I.L. was indeed a strong one. The group was accused of a “light-minded attitude on the organisational question”, being founded “as the result of purely personal grievances”, without “any justifiable political basis for the separate maintenance of the group”. The resolution was crammed with errors, describing the ‘Peace and Unity Agreement’ as “an adequate basis for the development of the united British organisation”, accusing the W.I.L. of refusing to be represented either by a delegate or a letter (their sealed statement, which was never published, was described as “addressed to the world at large”), and ending with the words:

“Under these circumstances it is necessary to warn the comrades associated with the W.I.L. Group that they are being led on a path of unprincipled clique politics which can only land them in the mire. It is possible to maintain and develop a revolutionary political grouping of serious importance only on the basis of great principles. It is possible for a national group to maintain a constant revolutionary course only if it is firmly connected in one organisation with co-thinkers throughout the world and maintains a constant theoretical and political collaboration with them. The Fourth International alone is such an organisation. All purely national groupings, all those who reject international organisation, control and discipline, are in their essence reactionary”.²⁶

Doubts about this root and branch condemnation came only from one of the French delegates, Jean Rous, who got the conference to accept an amendment that “a final attempt be made to gain the Lee Group, but that it should be made clear that after this they would be treated as opponents”.²⁷

The fused organisation now set to work. The ‘Militant Labour League’ held its conference on November 6th, 1938, and began to function in the Labour Party and the League of Youth. The open section brought out two issues of its paper, *Workers’ Fight* in November and January. The energies

of all were concentrated upon opposing the War. In August, Reg Groves returned from Buckinghamshire to London, and joined Dewar, Wicks and Sara to call a meeting to revive the Socialist Anti-War Front. A manifesto was drawn up to distribute on the day conscripts were meant to register for the draft, and in November appeared the first issue of their paper *The Call*. Copies of their propaganda were carried into labour exchanges in gas-mask bags, announcing that "International Socialism is the only way by which war can be ended and the threat of Fascist domination dispelled", and that "the struggle for peace, cannot be separated from the struggle for Socialism".²⁸ No labour movement organisations were to be neglected in the London area. David Chalkley and Henry Sara put down a resolution in the Royal Arsenal Co-op opposing the National Register and War preparations, and although the Labour M.P. for Deptford got it defeated in Bexley, Sara got it through Tooting, and Chalkley carried it in the final meeting in Woolwich Town Hall, making a majority in the Society of two to one.²⁹ Unfortunately, they lost heart at a crucial moment, abandoning a conference they had called in Bermondsey Town Hall for the weekend that Hitler's armies actually sliced through France and Belgium.³⁰

In the run-up to the War the Communists were still supporting it,³¹ and they turned all their venom against the new organisation. The Fifteenth Party Congress in Birmingham in September 1938 claimed that "the successful defence of democracy" was "impossible without an energetic struggle against counter-revolutionary Trotskyism". "All honest workers" were to be mobilised to "drive these provocateurs out of the labour movement", in particular the I.L.P. and the N.C.L.C.³² When the R.S.L. and the Militant Labour League joined the London division of the I.L.P. to issue a manifesto describing 'British Democracy' as imperialist exploitation, J.R. Campbell stigmatised it as a "Fascist Fifth Column policy" of Trotskyist "Friends of Hitler, whom the labour movement must in self-preservation vomit out".³³ One J. Shields set out a list for the proposed witch hunt of the R.S.L., the R.S.P., Groves' Left Socialist Federation (long defunct), George Padmore's African Information Bureau, and even the I.L.P. leadership itself, as "definitely pursuing a Trotskyist line".³⁴ When one of Groves' articles was picked up by a German propaganda broadcast on the day the War broke out, the Communists had a field day.³⁵

Much effort was concentrated on trying to get the London Trades Council to take an anti-war stand. In December 1939 Arthur Cooper, delegated from the National Union of Clerks, and E.L. Davis from the Shop Assistants' Union, gained 86 votes against the Right's 174 on a motion opposing the War, on this occasion supported by the Communist Party, which had since changed its line.³⁶ In Leicester, Alex Acheson organised a conference of 60 delegates from the Labour Party, the Guild of Youth, the I.L.P., C.P., National Unemployed Workers' Movement, Leicester Trades Council and some local T.U. branches, to be addressed by Fenner Brockway and Starkey Jackson in the Co-op Hall on January 6th, 1940.³⁷

The greatest success came in Easter 1940 when Margaret Johns got the Annual conference of the Shop Assistants' Union (now U.S.D.A.W.) to condemn the War:

"I got a job in the office of John Lewis' in Oxford Street. I was minute secretary of my branch after I had been in it about a year, and I became a delegate to the Metropolitan District Council of the Union, and took quite an active part in recruiting drives and things like that. I was a delegate from the Metropolitan District Council to the Union Conference (I think) about four years in succession, and I took to moving resolutions about the coming imperialist war, which were supported in my branch by Leigh Davis when he joined - and some old pacifist members - and the resolution went up from the branch. Normally I got only a handful of votes, chiefly of the old radical anti-militarists rather than pacifists (pre-1914 vintage).

When this famous resolution came up on the preliminary agenda, there were a number of resolutions - one from my branch, but also a number from Communist Party branches, because the Communist Party had then changed its line, and was against the War. Well, one of the members of my own branch, one of the radical anti-militarists, was on the Standing Orders Committee, and by some means or other managed to get the C.P.ers to withdraw their resolutions in favour of mine.

So that left me moving it, and instead of as (hitherto) being ostracised by the Communist Party, I got all their votes, as well as the non-Stalinists' anti-war votes. That's how I really got it passed - to my complete amazement!".³⁸

The resolution created a stir on both sides of the Atlantic. It described the War as an "imperialist war fought for the defence of British and French colonial possessions", and "in the interests of the capitalist class". So "the working class has no interest in supporting it", and it called upon "the whole trade union and labour movements to cease helping the government and use all their energy to end the hostilities".³⁹ To everyone's amazement, for the Battle of France was in progress, conference carried the motion by a margin of 4,000 votes (82 to 57 delegates).⁴⁰ But a motion of support for the foreign policy of the Soviet Union, put up at the same time, fell by 72 to 51 delegate votes.⁴¹

It was probably this that made the Labour Party bureaucracy place a ban on the Militant Labour League. No charges were ever laid against them, and the organisation only learned of this from the general press. It was "a denial of democracy and political freedom" amounting to a "Gestapo-like attempt".⁴² Despite letters exchanged with the N.E.C. "stressing the right of minorities to exist, that it has always been the practice of the Labour Party to have minorities",⁴³ the ban remained - as late as 1949!⁴⁴

But by now the Labour Party itself hardly met, and many of the group's

members were in the forces. For the last two years the only successful activity of the group came from its 'Left Fraction', in opposition now to the Harber leadership. A most amazing intervention was made into a bus strike threatened in Leeds on November 29th, 1942. For some time the city transport department had been playing on the divisions between bus and tram workers and between regular men and split shift men, when they took the unwise step of lengthening the hours of the spare men at the same time as imposing heavier duties upon the regular drivers. Their patience exhausted, along with the existing complaints machinery, a mass meeting of 1500 on November 29th decided on a strike for the following weekend. Straightaway troops arrived in the depots to guard property, inhibit picketing, and drive the buses. Here John Robinson takes up the story:

"I was called up to Leeds because there was some difference of opinion over something or other, and while I was in Leeds, prior to the discussion of whatever it was, it was mentioned that there was a transport strike about to take place. This must have been on Friday night. On Saturday night there would be the strike meeting. It was known that (or believed that) the council would call in the military to break the strike, and it was then that I said, 'Well hadn't we better do something about this?' And it was agreed that we draft a letter as from the soldiers (the one soldier we had in our group was Harry Selby), and we got down to producing a letter which we distributed on a Saturday evening. It was winter, it was dark early, and there were blackout regulations, and he was instructed to get on buses and when the conductress was approaching him for his fare he was to get up, give one of the letters and disappear in the darkness. He accomplished this successfully and got his train back to his military camp".⁴⁵

The letter told the strikers that "you must know that although there are some who are prepared to take action on your behalf and many who sympathise with you, the nature of military discipline necessitates that this sympathy does not find open expression and that every action be secret". It advised picketing bus and tram stops to stop people using military vehicles, distribution of the letter to the troops, and urged the strikers to stand "firm and united".⁴⁶

The strike came to a swift end. As Robinson recalls:

"That night the meeting of the strikers took place and the letters were read out (or a copy of the letter) - there were four letters sent and delivered. We don't know how many actually reached the strike committee (probably the lot). The strike was called off because every single demand was met in full".⁴⁷

Oblivious of the fact that the crucial letter had come from Trotskyists in its own ranks, the local Labour Party accused the W.I.L. of "butting in" on the

strike, assuming from the report in *Socialist Appeal* that they had something to do with it!⁴⁸

The only life remaining in the R.S.L. by this time was in the 'Left'. One of its supporters, Gibbie Russell, a retired miner, was Secretary of Hamilton Labour Party, and had built up a rank and file miners' committee from his contacts. By February 1943 their paper *The Militant Scottish Miner*, edited by Tom Mercer and Roddy Hood, was claiming sales of 1000 copies, and was beginning to worry the Labour bureaucracy and the Stalinists alike. In an article in *The Daily Herald*, Sir Patrick Dollan accused them of having a 'Central Bureau' with "representatives in most districts" causing "unnecessary stoppages" by exploiting "minor difficulties for political purposes" under the influence of "anti-war ideas".⁴⁹ The Stalinists were venomous.⁵⁰ Despite the fact that Russell himself had proposed the resolution objecting to the ban on the *Daily Worker* on the delegate council of the Lanarkshire miners two years before, they got the union's delegate council to denounce the paper and at the same time the *Daily Herald* published an inaccurate report that the E.C. of the Scottish Mineworkers had requested the Ministry of Supply to withdraw their paper allocation.⁵¹ Despite this, their nominee for the E.C. of the Scottish Miners Union, Brannan of the I.L.P., secured 7,792 votes against his Stalinist - backed rival's 9,915.⁵² Later, when 8,000 miners went on strike against the jailing of their comrades, the same union executive described them as "victims of a planned attempt not only to destroy the trade union, but to bring about a political situation by a group of people identified with the Anarchist Movement, the I.L.P. and the so called 'Militant Miners' ".⁵³

One of the many reasons that the activity of the R.S.L. was impeded was the number of its supporters who were in the army. In addition to the members of the American S.W.P. and the W.I.L. (below, pp.86-87), members of the R.S.L. also played a rôle in re-establishing contact with the Italian revolutionaries, and the following memories of Charles Van Gelderen repay close study:

"I arrived in Italy with the British army soon after the fall of Mussolini. It was really like living in a political renaissance, because overnight Marxist books appeared on open air bookstalls dated 1926, with the pages still uncut. I've got a copy somewhere that I bought in Italy at the time. The shopkeepers, when these books were banned, simply buried them in the cellar, and waited for the time when they could bring them out again. It was really a most exhilarating atmosphere. Everyone was being most political, and very revolutionary. When you went to the headquarters of even the socialist parties you saw a picture of Marx and Stalin, with slogans like 'Power to the Workers', and the whole atmosphere was very revolutionary. I couldn't speak any Italian at the time, but I could speak German. I met an Italian Socialist who spoke German, and he

took me along to speak to a group of young Socialists. He was a centrist, or even right of centrist, and he asked me to speak on any subject I liked in German, and he translated from German into Italian.

I can't remember exactly what I said, but shortly after this meeting I had a caller at the army depot. It was an American Military Policeman. He asked for me and I went out to meet him, and we started walking. He said that some friends of his were at the meeting that I had spoken to, and they thought I might be 'one of us'. I asked him what he meant, and he said 'I am a Trotskyist'. I then said 'Yes', but I didn't come out openly with my view, I expressed my views on Socialism. He said: 'But from what you said somebody gathered you were putting forward a Trotskyist position'. He then told me he was in touch with the Italian Trotskyists. I thought he then asked me whether I was a Cannonite, and I said 'Yes', and he said 'Good'. Actually, he had asked whether I was a Shachtmanite, because he had supported Shachtman at the time of the split. Later he told me that in actual fact he supported the position of C.L.R. James, and not the position of Shachtman.

He put me in touch with Nicola de Bartolomeo. Nicola was an old Bolshevik/Leninist, who had been in Spain with the the Trotskyist brigade, and at the time of the Molinier split he had supported Molinier and Pierre Frank in France, and at first had supported Shachtman's position as well. But in the course of the discussion I won them both over, over a period, to the official position of the Fourth International.

In the meantime Shachtman was sending sailors to Naples with money, and I asked one of them whether he would take a letter from me to the States which I addressed to Cannon's wife, Rose Karsner, and strangely enough, he must have done so. I said I knew her personally, and that it was a personal letter. I didn't, of course. The next thing was that I was contacted by Charles Curtis. He was in the American Army, and other Americans contacted me, too.

They were a tremendous source of income as far as the Italian movement was concerned. I was selling all my cigarette rations on the black market and giving all the money to the movement, and they were bringing in whole packets of American cigarettes that were worth a fortune. You could almost buy Naples with a packet. Nicola, together with the comrade who had introduced me to the young Socialists - between the two of them - controlled the Socialist Party trade union organisation. They were in a very strong position. Once we started supplying them with funds they began to think in terms of an independent paper. They issued a paper called *Il Militante*.

In the meantime, I also established contact with Bordiga. I met an Italian Bordigist who was a shoemaker, and we became very friendly.

He was at the time a member of the Communist Party. One night he invited me to supper at his house, and at the end of the supper he said in a whisper 'Would you like to meet Bordiga?' So I met Bordiga, and we became very good friends. We had many interesting discussions, and I found that he hadn't changed his position at all. He was a very colourful personality, and his followers actually worshipped him. This was a very interesting experience for me. Then one day an American comrade, who was actually a Shachtmanite (he was in the air force), reported to us that he had seen in Bari, which was on the other side from Naples, a poster calling for a Fourth International. It was signed by Mangama.

So we decided to make contact with him. Now that zone was under the control of the Americans. Naples was under the control of the British. The point was, how were we to get there? You needed permits to move, and a military pass. It was quite easy for me to get a pass. I was working in an army hospital office, and I made out a pass for myself, and signed it myself. Any name didn't matter, as long as it was signed by a lieutenant or captain at the back of it, and with the official stamp on the other side. An American comrade in the Military Police gave Nicola a letter saying that Nicola di Bartolomeo was working with the American Military Police, and had permission to see his dying mother in Bari, because the only means of transport was hitch-hiking on military vehicles. Well somehow, by means of hitch-hiking on military vehicles, and travelling a long distance on top of a big wine barrel drawn by a horse, and over the mountains, we finally arrived at Foggia, and we found Mangama.

The walls were full of these posters calling for the Fourth International. The manifesto was a very sectarian document, like the Bordigists, and I managed to get a copy through to England which was published in W.I.N. We had long discussions with them, and eventually they agreed to join us. But it made it even worse, because I wanted them to continue work in Socialist Party. But we were hopelessly outnumbered, and they had money, and contact with people in Rome.....

They called themselves Potere Operaia Italiana. I have a membership card downstairs with No.1 membership on it, and 'The Fourth International'. We got to Mangama and we spent two days there, and then I had to be back at the barracks next day so we started back. I could get a lift back, but there was no way that they would accept Nicola. No motor vehicles were allowed to pick up hikers, In the end I had to go back on my own. It took Nicola ten days to get back to Naples. Later on, when things eased a bit, we were able to travel to and fro, and Mangama visited us.....

It was a very fruitful period of my life. We started the Italian Section of the International. Nicola, unfortunately, died in 1946. At

that time I was in Algiers, where I had the pleasure of hearing Andre Marty speaking at a huge meeting. All the French settlers were supporting the Communist Party, and Marty was saying that Algiers was France. Whilst I was in Naples, Togliatti came back from the Soviet Union, and whilst workers everywhere were talking about 'workers' power' and 'Socialism' - Badoglio was then Prime Minister - Togliatti said, 'No, comrades, our main job is to defeat the German enemy. We didn't need workers in power, we need Field Marshals in power. Your job is to join the army, support our allies, and turn the Germans out of the country'. This was Togliatti's first speech on Italian soil. I was standing there whilst he was saying it. I was with the Bordigist comrade, who was still inside the Communist Party, officially.....

In Italy Nicola di Bartolomeo, who was also in the Molinier Group, told me he had gone over to London (i.e. pre-war) on behalf of the Molinier Group, and the only names they knew in England were Haston and Grant. I have no evidence at all but what appeared in the paper. I knew nothing at all about this until Nicola di Bartolomeo definitely mentioned Grant and Haston, 'Hestoon', as he used to call him".⁵⁴

But by this time the R.S.L. had been reduced to commenting on events, and not influencing them. It had plainly failed the test of War. This is not at all surprising, as the isolation of the Trotskyists and their poor class implantation led to worldwide disintegration in the course of the War. Even those groups which had a mass base were not immune from this; the Vietnamese Section had split before the War⁵⁵ and the Ceylonese during it;⁵⁶ the havoc among those of poor class implantation and uneven composition was far greater. The French movement was in three pieces already in 1939,⁵⁷ and the Chinese Trotskyists developed as many in the course of the War.⁵⁸ During the War the German group in exile split,⁵⁹ and the much-vaunted American S.W.P.⁶⁰ What was much worse, the apparatus of the International practically ceased to exist. The International Executive Committee broke down,⁶¹ and in any case supported Shachtman's point of view.⁶² The International Secretariat was transferred to the United States in such a manner as to break the continuity in its work,⁶³ and after the International was reconstituted at an emergency conference in May 1940, it functioned as a sort of postbox attached to the American S.W.P. Only rarely did this disintegration take the form of adopting outright chauvinist or defencist positions; more usually it was "a tendency to refrain from active participation, a tendency to self elimination, to abstentionism, naturally under cover of ultra-radical phrases".⁶⁴

The paper unification that had set up R.S.L. began to come apart almost as soon as the ink had dried upon it, even before the War was declared, and

as the War went on, the R.S.L. dissolved into its component parts. Not only did the entry and open sections part company at a more or less rapid rate, but divisions appeared in both these camps based not so much upon political differences as on lines of personal friendship or geographical distribution. They degenerated into what the 'Left' called a "circle, not a party", and turned in among themselves.

Paradoxically, the R.S.L.'s failure to relate to the day-to-day experiences of the working class stemmed from its retreat into the Labour Party. Although the entry tactic had been designed with the very opposite in mind, the War, at a stroke, transformed the whole situation. Labour Party inner life was at a minimum due to the electoral truce. Wards hardly met. Most of the active elements were doing overtime in wartime industry, or were in the forces themselves. As the Labour Party is essentially an electoral machine, the fact that elections were not being fought had a paralysing effect. Theorising totally divorced from action led to abstentionism, reflecting itself in inactivity at crisis points, concessions to pacifism, a retreat into clandestinity, and a regime of permanent factional conflict, resulting firstly in splits, and then in complete disintegration.

Within a month of the formation of the group the Czech crisis hit British politics. Up in Edinburgh the R.S.P. was running mass meetings at the Mound, public interest was at fever pitch, the Stalinists were selling hundreds of thousands of papers, and the comrades were waiting desperately for copies of the open journal, *Workers Fight*. For two weeks no instructions arrived. "The unified organisation left us absolutely and completely in the lurch, and I sent a telegram to London asking them what the hell they were doing", exclaimed Frank Maitland.⁶⁵ It transpired that the group had shut down its headquarters and gone into clandestinity, assuming that war had arrived. "Our protest to London received the reply that they had no money and could receive no credit from the printers", ran an R.S.P. statement. "Besides, Headquarters was so busy arranging to go into illegality in the event of war that it had not time to help make the party position known to the workers. We could not help being scornful of a position which refused to make itself known to thousands of workers who were thronging the streets and working class meetings, but wished to hide itself because a war might break out".⁶⁶ So sharp were the criticisms of the R.S.P. that Harber and Jackson refused to admit them into the unified organisation, or even to the following group conference of 11th-12th February, 1939, violating the Peace and Unity Agreement.⁶⁷ From then on the R.S.P. led a separate propaganda existence, defending the position of the Fourth International in a number of useful pamphlets.⁶⁸ An attempt to float the first British Trotskyist weekly paper, the *Workers Weekly*, on May Day 1939 failed to get off the ground, and finally, during the Edinburgh by-election the leadership of the group campaigned for the I.L.P. and entered it as its St Andrews branch in December 1941, which the rank and file rejected as pacifism and joined the W.I.L. instead.⁶⁹

The next to depart from the R.S.L. was Gerry Bradley, who had been made the scapegoat for the inactivity of the open section during the Munich crisis. He was expelled after an assault on E.L. Davis. Hard upon him followed Henry Sara and Harry Wicks, who left after a dispute over the nature of Socialist opposition to the War. They had been co-operating with Groves, who was on the executive of the No Conscription League, and Dewar, who had written a pamphlet opposing the National Register, neither of these being Trotskyist positions. As Wicks was to describe it:

“As a result of that position, differences developed in the Committee. Henry Sara and I were on the Committee, and there were differences with Harber, Margaret Johns, Starkey Jackson - I can't remember the others who were there, but these differences developed, that we were 'making concessions to pacifism'.⁷⁰

In January 1941 Wicks and Dewar joined the I.L.P. as its South West London branch⁷¹ and published a Trotskyist journal called *Free Expression* within that party. Along with Wilfrid Wigham, Alf Loughton, Don McGregor and Bill Hunter they formed the I.L.P. Industrial Committee which put out *Shop Steward* and helped the W.I.L. to set up the Militant Workers' Federation. But they were stern opponents of the move to reaffiliate the I.L.P. to the Labour Party, and Dewar stood against Douglas Jay on behalf of the I.L.P. in the North Battersea by-election in July 1946. The I.L.P. leaders, who had decided to desert to the Labour Party, and had their eyes set upon their own future seats, were less than enthusiastic. “I'm sorry that I cannot support your campaign politically”, wrote Fenner Brockway, and not a single M.P. put in an appearance on his platform. With the tide still flowing strongly to Labour, Dewar only garnered 240 votes. He continued to make a contribution to the movement in his poetry and his splendid books on revolutionary history, and Wicks returned to revolutionary politics for a short while in the late 1960's by joining the I.S. But their active involvement in the leadership of the Trotskyist Movement ceased from this time onwards, a last sad break with its original roots.

No sooner had Wicks and Sara been removed for pacifism than the whole organisation indulged in it. The *Militant* of June 1939 demanded that the “E.C. of your trade union instruct all its members of conscription age to refuse to register, and defend them if they are prosecuted for refusing”,⁷² which was the opposite of the Trotskyist policy that revolutionaries should not cut themselves off from other workers in uniform, or miss the opportunity for training in arms that the revolution was going to need. Worse still, the single sheet issue of *Militant* which came out a month after war was declared, bore the headline of ‘Stop the War’, precisely the view of the pacifists that Lenin had criticised as sowing illusions in the ability and intentions of imperialist governments to stop the fighting - i.e. cease being capitalists!⁷³ Even more unreal was the attitude on Air Raid Precautions. On October 27th, 1938 Starkey Jackson presented a report to the Executive of

the R.S.L. condemning the A.R.P. as Imperialist war preparations, which was endorsed by the Committee, and became group policy at the Easter Conference of the group in 1939. When A.R.P. was the issue, "the R.S.L. will tell the workers that their only effective defence lies in the prevention of imperialist war by class struggle against capitalism", and that when blackouts and air raids took place comrades were to "urge a policy of boycott by the working class", oppose demands "for better air-raid precautions and expose their social chauvinist character".⁷⁴ "Dare any fake revolutionary show his head", asked the Hampstead R.S.L. group in astonishment, "and try to lead the workers to direct action when they feel (rightly or wrongly) that here is a man who is partly to blame for the massacre because he opposed bomb proof shelters, opposed Air Raid Precautions?"⁷⁵ And as the War went on, again and again the group returned to this question, until it turned into a minor obsession.

The same conference that had finally excluded the R.S.P. and confirmed Bradley's expulsion bought to a head another conflict. Since September 1938 Bill Duncan had carried on a continuous battle with the E.C. of the fused groups from inside the Islington Branch. Drawing on his deep acquaintance with Marxism he subjected Harber and Jackson to a withering criticism - on their absurd position on air raid shelters, their manoeuvres to exclude the R.S.P., and their running down of the open work in favour of the entry section. The work of the Islington Branch, which contained supporters of both entry (Margaret Johns, Charles Van Gelderen) and open work (Duncan, Hilda Lane) was so completely disrupted, that Jackson was sent down to divide it and replace its elected secretary with Margaret Johns.

The conference of the 11th and 12th February, 1939 was a lively affair. No sooner had proceedings opened in the New Morris Hall at Clapham than the E.C. carried by 42 votes to 23 a resolution expelling Duncan, Hilda Lane, Hilda Pratt and Ben Elsbury. At this Cliff Stanton sprang to his feet and called upon all "Fourth Internationalists" to leave the hall for another conference. Sixteen delegates got up and left. As the new group had been a majority of the open section, they appeared to begin with as the 'Revolutionary Socialist League', the true section of the Fourth International in Britain:

"..... the R.S.L. of Harber and Jackson is merely another name for the M.L.L. It is quite evident that Jackson knew that the M.L.L. as such would never have received the recognition of the I.S., and that he was therefore compelled to pose the existence of the 'R.S.L.' as an independent organisation in order to stand a good chance of being recognised as the British Section. It was on this basis that we claimed that the conference was merely a conference of the M.L.L., and since we refused to accept their authority, claimed that we, in fact, were the R.S.L. with the paper *Workers Fight*, British Section of the Fourth International".⁷⁶

No sooner had their first pamphlet appeared - Ben Elsbury's *Alibi-Arms For Spain* - than an announcement appeared in *Militant* that "the R.S.L. wishes to state that it is not responsible for this publication", whose authors had been expelled for "disruptive and undisciplined activity".⁷⁷ After a short interim period, in which they continued to use the old name of the R.S.L., the new group assumed that of the 'Revolutionary Workers League'. Their large format open paper, *Workers Fight*, was coming out fortnightly at one time, and they issued a number of pamphlets.

In April 1939 they had a notable addition of strength from a group of Communist Party members in Islington who had broken with Stalinism as a result of the Spanish Civil War. Among the volunteers for the International Brigade there was Bob Armstrong, a Scottish member of Islington Communist Party. Whilst in Spain he was twice wounded in action and marked down as 'unfit for service', but was puzzled that, along with others in a similar position, he had not been repatriated to Britain.⁷⁸ When he finally did get home he was used as a speaker on the platforms of the Dependents' Aid Committee, addressing many meetings, including one of no less than 3200 A.E.U. members in Slough, along with Paul Robeson and Isabel Brown.

For a while he had no doubts about the politics involved, but when General Miaja - classed as a Communist - played his part in opening the way for Franco, he began to connect it with his own experience there: "It was only a long time after I was back in England, however, that I was able to piece together the various fragments of the puzzle and see the whole position".⁷⁹ Connected with him was a small group of comrades - his fellow branch committee member Bert Atkinson, Arthur Farrager, Bill Bailey and Elsie McCullough, and they had been disquieted for some time by the number of respectable people that the policy of the Popular Front had been bringing into the Communist Party. As Bert Atkinson recalls:

"I can remember going down to King's Cross, half a dozen of us selling (Emile Burns pamphlet), and I've never known a response to a pamphlet like it.⁸⁰ We literally sold them like hot cakes. We could have sold twelve times more. And the people that were coming up to us! Of course, a lot of them were travellers from the North. I remember two or three Scotsmen coming up to us, you know, delighted to get hold of something. But the point is, that's where I think my first doubts came, because in that pamphlet Burns definitely makes the statement that the fight in Spain is not for a Soviet Spain. And this struck me immediately, you know, and I began to have doubts - but not serious doubts. But I know when I read this, I thought to myself - you know, it jarred, and I think it was from that time that my own doubts began. And when Armstrong started to have doubts, and we used to discuss together, and then of course we began to get hold of one or two bits of Trotskyist literature....."⁸¹

They then began to take their doubts into the Communist Party's meetings, meeting no overt hostility to begin with:

"First of all at one meeting where we got up - or I got up and spoke and I think this old pal of mine Bill Bailey got up and spoke, we were received more or less friendly, you know. I mean one or two of the remarks we made were treated with hostility, but nevertheless it wasn't a bad reception".⁸²

But when they submitted a document, the party even refused to circulate it in the local branch:

".....we made a protest as to why we couldn't address the membership through a document.... They said they would have to discuss this further. We had resigned, but we said we were prepared to remain if they discussed it. They called another meeting in a couple of months time, and they started a whispering campaign. When we addressed it we were talking to a brick wall".⁸³

At this Islington aggregate meeting, attended by between a hundred and a hundred and fifty people, they were "treated with absolute hostility, terrible hostility", "interrupted all the time, and there was never any serious attempt to argue with us, or discuss with us". Finally, David Springhall was sent to deal with them:

"They sent down Springhall, they sent down Idris Cox..... and Bill Rowe..... It became clear to me that there could be no question of any kind of agreement, or any kind of compromise. Either we were right, or they were right, and it was obvious that they weren't going to say that they were wrong".⁸⁴

Two weeks later they were invited down to King Street to talk about it, but "by that time we were so surrounded by hostility that we never even bothered."⁸⁵ Shortly afterwards slanders began to circulate that they were drunkards, brawlers, and even anti-Semitic, and that Armstrong was a deserter, had shot himself and embezzled money.⁸⁶

The R.W.L. took its international obligations very seriously. The run-up to the War was marked by a renewed campaign by the I.R.A. In January 1939 the first explosions took place in London, Birmingham and Manchester, which continued until March 1940, reaching their peak in July 1939. They accomplished little apart from isolating the I.R.A. from the Irish Community in Britain, whose civil liberties as a result were greatly curtailed by the government. The 'Prevention of Violence Bill' of 24th July gave the authorities the power to demand the registration of all Irish citizens in Britain and to deport whomsoever they wished, and inside a week forty-eight had been deported.⁸⁷ The yellow press was able to whip up such anti-Irish feeling that as Summer wore on many of them were being assaulted in the streets.

Among the supporters of the R.W.L. living in West London was James Murphy, a building worker who had been brought into the Trotskyist movement by Arthur Ballard and Jock Milligan⁸⁸, and in February 1939 along with Tommy Dunne he set up the 'Friends of the Irish Republic' (as proclaimed in 1916), to make an internationalist stand for the unification of Ireland through the struggle for a workers' republic. On the anniversary of the shooting of Connolly on the 12th May, F.O.T.I.R. organised a large commemoration meeting in Hyde Park, which passed a resolution that:

"Today, the Irish masses, disorientated and disillusioned, seem to have delegated the fight to a handful of militants in the I.R.A. It is our duty, as class conscious, revolutionary workers, to rouse the Irish masses to action; for only in the armed might of the workers and small farmers of Ireland lies the possibility of securing our freedom and the emancipation of our class".⁸⁹

A further statement of the same bold message to a meeting in Trafalgar Square a month afterwards provoked an attempt by Major H.A. Procter, M.P. for Accrington, to get such meetings banned, in a question put to the Home Secretary in the House of Commons on June 29th:

"Major H.A. Procter asked the Home Secretary whether in the interests of public order and safety, steps will be taken to prevent permission being granted in future for demonstrations such as that of Sunday, 25th June, in Trafalgar Square, when Friends of the Irish Republic, with anti-British banners, attacked the methods of the British police, seeing that it is likely to lead to grave breaches of the peace when provocative demonstrations of this kind are allowed on the part of sympathisers with the Irish Republicans, following upon the serious damage to persons and property by bombs in the same quarter of London on the night of Saturday, 24th June?".⁹⁰

The Undersecretary of State promised that "a careful watch will be kept on any similar meetings", and on June 8th Murphy was duly arrested for referring to the "bloody Union Jack" in front of an audience of 100 at a public meeting in Down place, Hammersmith. As the National Council for Civil Liberties refused to help him, and then referred him to a Communist Party solicitor who was instructed by his organisation to refuse to handle the case, Murphy defended himself in court. Calling Cliff Stanton as a witness, he gave examples from the history of British colonialism in Ireland, India and Jamaica to prove the truth of his statement, and quoted the Trotskyist press as documentary evidence.⁹¹ On that occasion he was fined £5, but an identical charge some weeks later brought him a month in jail.⁹² Meanwhile the Chairman of F.O.T.I.R., William Curtin, a former lieutenant wounded in action in the International Brigade in Spain, was fined a further 10 shillings for saying that the Union Jack stood for "murder, starvation, and atrocities".⁹³

Despite his firm denial⁹⁴ the London evening papers reported that Murphy at his first trial had declared that "he had no connection whatever with the I.R.A.; in fact, he had been threatened by them".⁹⁵ Whether on this account, or because he was suspected of being an informer, his friend Dunne had a couple of bullets put into him by the I.R.A. when he went back to Ireland. After that he joined the R.A.F., and was among the first to make contact with the Belgian Trotskyists at the end of the War.

Another internationalist attracted at the same time was Isaac Deutscher. His main connection with the Trotskyist movement had been in his native Poland, and by the time he came to Britain he was already in the course of dropping out. He framed the arguments with which the two Polish delegates to the founding conference of the Fourth International sought to prevent it being proclaimed, on the grounds that it had no mass basis, and was premature.⁹⁶ In April 1939 he left Warsaw and arrived in London by way of Paris. One of the writers encountered him at Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park in the Summer of 1939, and on the following Sunday introduced him to Jock Haston. His halting English prevented them from exchanging more than a few words.

Deutscher was not attracted to the W.I.L., but moved into association with Cliff Stanton, Bill Duncan and Hilda Lane, by which time his English had improved enough to contribute a series of articles on international topics to *Workers Fight* under the heading of 'From a Marxist Note-book' using the pseudonym of Josef Bren. At the same time he began to support himself as a journalist by submitting articles to *The Economist*, starting with one on Marx and Capital. After the R.W.L. broke up he volunteered for the Polish forces being organised in Britain and enlisted as a corporal.⁹⁷

Despite its new recruits, the R.W.L. never gained much influence outside of their local base in Islington, where they had a bookshop in Upper Street. They bankrupted themselves by printing 5,000 copies of Trotsky's 'The U.S.S.R. in War', and the group more or less disintegrated when the May 1940 Emergency Conference of the Fourth International called upon it to reunify with the Harber/Jackson Majority.⁹⁸ Carford, Jock Milligan, the Dewar brothers, Bert Atkinson, Arthur Farrager and Bill Bailey, and all the younger members and new recruits like Jim Hinchcliffe joined the W.I.L. and published a declaration that they had fused groups in the pages of *Workers International News*.⁹⁹ After much delay and many abortive negotiations Hilda Lane and the other eleven rejoined the R.S.L. in Summer 1941, where they were later to become part of the 'Trotskyist Opposition' that developed in the group a year afterwards.¹⁰⁰ Bill Duncan remained on the fringes of the movement, unwilling to join any other group. The real moving spirit in the R.W.L., Cliff Stanton, went off after a squabble about money owed for copies of the *New International* from the United States. In the army, later in the War, he appeared in front of a court martial for telling two soldiers that "if the soldiers were to lay down their arms there would be no war". He got six months in the glasshouse after

making a brave speech that only a workers' government could end the imperialist war, and that the present government and the capitalist class should be overthrown by the workers and soldiers.¹⁰¹

This was by no means the last word in the conflict between the 'open party' and 'entrust' conceptions. In January 1940 Arthur Cooper, Sid Bone, Fred Emmett and eleven others drew up a document entitled 'Our Present Tasks' to be presented to the following Easter Conference of the R.S.L. In it, along with some drastic condemnations of the theory and practice of Harber and his associates, was a demand for a "searching self criticism of our tactics during the past three years: i.e. existing as a faction inside the L(about) P(arty)".¹⁰² For a while they held a majority of the R.S.L.'s London membership, but failed to carry with them the rest of the group. When Harber expelled Cooper for declaring, in an outside meeting, that he would not carry out the R.S.L.'s policy "because he disagreed with it"¹⁰³ on the 5th February, 1941, the others followed him to set up the 'Socialist Workers Group'. The new organisation, with its chief basis in Camberwell, put out a magazine called *Socialist Fight* and concentrated on trying to organise old I.L.P. militants and others who opposed the War to work together inside industry and the trades unions. Cooper was quite at home in this milieu, having argued against the split with the I.L.P. in 1936, and had gathered around himself a group of young workers through his battles against the War on the London Trades Council. After abortive discussions with the W.I.L., the S.W.G. finally fused with the 'Trotskyist Opposition' after the Majority had first accepted and then rejected their application to rejoin the R.S.L.¹⁰⁴

The 'Trotskyist Opposition' itself developed when a gap began to open up between the R.S.L. and the rest of the International Trotskyist Movement over the policy to be adopted during the Second World War. Considerable disquiet arose inside the R.S.L. when its newspaper adopted the pacifist slogan of 'Stop the War',¹⁰⁵ and Boyle and Goffe put down a resolution at the following Easter Conference describing it as "incorrect" and that the slogan of "no annexations - no indemnities" was an "inadmissible demand which can only sow illusions that this government, a capitalist government, should cease to be imperialist".¹⁰⁶

Their view on that occasion was rejected by 46 votes to 24. But when the text of the American Military Policy of James P. Cannon was received in England, the R.S.L. leadership condemned it as a concession to defencism, and the gulf became unbridgeable:

"This might be construed by some as support for the opportunist demand put forward by certain organisations in this country for the arming of the workers. The slogan 'Arm the Workers', put forward in a belligerent country when the masses are at a white heat of patriotism and in immediate fear of the invasion, is purely defencist and patriotic in character. The masses, at such a time, desire arms in order to repel

the invader, i.e. in order to defend their 'own' capitalist state. Such a slogan is used by the imperialists for recruiting purposes.....

The British Section, therefore, states that the demand in the international manifesto has no validity in the existing conditions in this country...."¹⁰⁷

When the National Conference of the R.S.L. met in September 1941 the North London Branch, including ex-members of the R.W.L. and led by John Lawrence and Hilda Lane, submitted a document 'On the Military Policy' and demanded that the S.W.P. resolution on this question be discussed and voted upon.¹⁰⁸ In this they were not only opposed by the leading group of D.D. Harber, but also by the group's 'Left' fraction led by John Robinson and Tom Mercer, and the 'Military Policy' was rejected by 49 votes to 26. Worse still, rejection of the 'Military Policy' was made a condition for membership of the R.S.L. by a decision of the Central Committee on August 22nd, 1942.¹⁰⁹

Harber had already threatened to expel the new opposition at the Conference, and on the 19th July, 1942 the Central Committee suspended 14 of them from membership, pending their signatures on a statement within a week, after which their expulsion was to be automatic.¹¹⁰ Seven of them failed to comply, and at a Central Committee meeting on November 14th Harber announced that the rest should be expelled at the very next session. The new group, the 'Trotskyist Opposition',¹¹¹ became, in effect, an autonomous unit, but they did not function openly or put out material in their own name, continuing to regard themselves as a faction of the official section and appealing to the International Secretariat to intervene. By early 1943 they themselves had already produced a minority group.¹¹²

By then the organisation had been long in a state of acute disintegration. The controversy over the 'Military Policy' and the expulsion of the 'Trotskyist Opposition' had loosened the last bonds that held together the 'Centre' of D.D. Harber and the 'Left' inside the R.S.L. The bonds had been under some strain for some time.

As early as August 1940 the Leicester Group of the R.S.L. had addressed a letter protesting that the Executive had broken the previous conference decisions on entry work by publishing an open bulletin in the name of 'The Fourth International'.¹¹³ When the leadership began to back-pedal from the policy on Air-Raid Precautions a second protest in November 1940 charged the E.C. with capitulating to defencism. In May 1941 John Robinson and Will Dillon brought out a document entitled *Bolshevism and Defencism* and followed it up with a further exposé, *A Circle or a Party?*, launching the 'Left Fraction of the British Section of the Fourth International'.¹¹⁴ To begin with based mainly in Leicester, their support spread to Scotland, where they were joined by Gibbie Russell, Harry Selby and Tom Mercer, who was married to John Maclean's daughter, and had a long history in the working class movement in Glasgow.

They accused the International Secretariat's 'Military Policy' of capitulating to chauvinism, and the Harber leadership of the R.S.L. with occupying a middle position between that and a revolutionary standpoint. After a factional dispute, marked by more than usual acrimony, the whole of the 'Left' was expelled from the R.S.L. in January, 1943, by the device of a 'loyalty' pledge that they were given until the 21st of the month to sign. When the R.S.L. Conference met on the 6th and 7th February and 'Trotskyist Opposition' were present to appeal against their own expulsion, the 'Left' were not there to do the same, as they had not been told of the time or place of the venue. In this way the British Section of the Fourth International lost its last active members, its newspaper, and its credibility. "It is a long time since D.D. H(arber)'s faction abandoned any pretence of normal or healthy organisational life", wrote Jean Van Heijenoort to John Robinson.¹¹⁵ "The Central Committee of D.D.H. has, by a series of impermissible and unheard-of bureaucratic manipulations, finally managed to 'expel' a majority of the organisation" commented the International Secretariat. "These fantastic operations have been carried through in gross violation of the elementary rules and methods and traditional practices of the F(ourth) I(nternational)". "By its actions", ran the statement, "The C.C. of D.D.H. has forfeited all right to be considered the leadership of the British Section of the Fourth International, and is no longer so regarded by the I.S. It no longer has the right or moral authority to expel or reinstate anybody. The C.C. of D.D.H. represents a minority faction, no more, and has no special rights or authority whatsoever".¹¹⁶

All this was true enough. By the Summer of 1943, the 170 members who founded the R.S.L. had shrunk to 23. The printed *Militant* no longer appeared; there was no paid full-timer; and a treasurer's report to the C.C. dated 10th August admitted that the total literature sales for the last six months amounted to the princely sum of £2.2s.6d.! All contact had by now been lost with the working class, such as when the executive assured "our comrades in the factories" that they could "rely upon us supplying them with printed leaflets to help their work - provided that they furnish us with the necessary information".¹¹⁷ The group had retreated into a clandestinity so extreme that not only did it not maintain a public address of its own, but even refused to write to the public addresses of others. They even refused to publish the *Transitional Programme*.¹¹⁸

Irreplaceable comrades had been lost along the way, or dispersed into the army. Margaret Johns withdrew into domestic life.¹¹⁹ Starkey Jackson began to take his distance, condemning the "pedantic and rigid interpretation" of the Labour Party tactic and describing Harber's military policy as "revolutionary abstentionism".¹²⁰

Not long afterwards he was called up. At the end of February 1943 the news came back that he was lost at sea after U-boat activity in the Atlantic.¹²¹ Even this tragedy was made the occasion of a sectarian polemic.¹²²

The causes of the disintegration were, of course, laid at the door of

exceptionally difficult circumstances. According to Harber, the wave of chauvinism that had come over the masses in 1939, and had intensified during the Battle of Britain, had isolated the revolutionaries from the masses, and led to splits among them. Thus the 'Trotskyist Opposition' was an opportunist tendency (shared by the 'Cannonite I.S. '), whereas the 'Left' was a sectarian and ultra-left development: "thus our political isolation was intensified and terrific pressure put upon our organisation and its members. The result has been the development of a number of unhealthy tendencies within our ranks which have culminated in the present position of acute factional struggle".¹²³ But this explanation, whilst feasible for the period 1939-41, no longer held good by 1943, when a rising tide of industrial militancy and the growth of other left tendencies (the W.I.L., the I.L.P. and the Anarchists) showed that the R.S.L.'s isolation was self-inflicted. The fact that the final break-up came in 1943 is very significant, for that was the year in which industrial militancy began a rapid rise after the almost strike-free period at the beginning of the War. It was a textbook illustration of the Marxist definition of the fortunes of a sect - opposite to that of the real movement, expanding during the defeat of the proletariat and disintegrating in the face of a real upsurge. As Marx said long ago, "by their nature the sects established by these initiators are abstentionist, strangers to all genuine action".¹²⁴ Their minute and Jesuitical discussions on deep air air-raid shelters and the like formed the fetish on which they fastened to justify their special and separate existence - exactly what Marx was describing when he wrote that "the sect sees the justification for its existence and its 'point of honour' - not in what it has in common with the class movement but in the particular shibboleth which distinguishes it from it".¹²⁵ For the truth was that these positions were elaborated in the sure knowledge that they would not have to be defended outside the group's narrow circle. As propaganda literature outside shrunk to zero, a lush growth of inner bulletins flourished in the atmosphere of an all-too vigorous internal life. As the War dragged on they became more and more clandestine, sticking all the closer to the entrism orientation as the inner and public life of the Labour Party itself dwindled into nothing.

The group's view of the link between theory and practice suffered accordingly. Its concepts ceased to be transitional ones: more a question of making abstract propaganda for the time when the class would become radicalised, and only then introducing the appropriate demands. "The *Transitional Programme* consists of a series of partial demands, to be fought for by our movements under appropriate conditions and designed to lead up to the conquest of power", Harber explained. "It is the task of our International to select such of these partial demands as are applicable to a given section at a given time".¹²⁶ In his view, the *Transitional Programme* was not meant to be taken as a whole or as such to be acted upon at present - it was more of a storehouse of demands for future use. "According to the reasoning of D.D.H(arber)", wrote John Lawrence, "we can only put

forward our transitional demands at the point when the workers need them least i.e. when, at last, they are non chauvinist.¹²⁷ It was an outlook automatically reducing Trotskyism from an active movement to one commenting from the sidelines, awaiting the future when policies would at last become relevant - the classic position of an apocalyptic sect.

On the other hand the Labour Party tactic had slipped into a position of reformism. "Our political slogans and tactics arise from concrete analysis", they wrote. "The present main task of the working class is the attaining of its political independence from the bourgeoisie. This aim is crystallised in the slogan of a 'Third Labour Government' which still retains its full validity".¹²⁸ But how the election of a Labour Government to office in a bourgeois parliament could "attain the political independence" of the working class from the bourgeoisie is not stated. As the W.I.L. observed:

"The demand for a Third Labour Government is completely incorrect and opportunist. It betrays a misunderstanding of the Leninist method of exposing the Labour leaders and is opportunist when put forward as it is without a programme. A Third Labour Government has a continuity with the Labour Governments one and two, and cannot but be interpreted as such - especially by the broad masses. The demand that *Labour take power into its own hands* on *our* programme of demands, has nothing in common with the experience of the previous Labour Governments....

The slogan 'Labour must break with the bourgeoisie and take power' is extremely different from the slogan of the 'Third Labour Government' such as those of 1924 and 1929 when Labour was a minority government, completely dependent on the Liberals - a fact which the Labour leaders never failed to use as an excuse for their crimes.

The object of putting forward such slogans is precisely to teach the masses the necessity for a sharp break with the past, the necessity to take power into their own hands".¹²⁹

In effect, the R.S.L. was paralysed because it contained inside it, from the very start, organisational and theoretical tensions that could not be resolved. Entrist and open work, Labour Party activity and open air propagandism, pacifism and the military policy, abstentionism and trade union work - all pulled in opposite directions, rending the group apart and cancelling each other out in the process. As Leigh Davis was finally led to admit, "unity is not possible except on the basis of political agreement. Any other form of unity, either by compromise between the organisations (as in the R.S.L. - M.G. - R.S.P. Unity Agreement negotiated by comrade Cannon) or enforced from above will result in new splits and groupings, and cannot possibly have any permanent value".¹³⁰

The utter collapse of the R.S.L. was the end of a whole period in the history of British Trotskyism. It is best summarised by one of the young

comrades who had gone into the R.W.L. from the R.S.L. and the Communist Party:

"The bookshop was running at a loss, and the trouble, of course, was that old Bill Duncan, though I liked him, he was a nice fellow and that, but he couldn't lead anything. I mean, his health was bad - he was neurasthenic, you know what I mean - he was unreliable, of course, and in fact the driving force behind that group, no doubt about it, was Cliff Stanton, because he was a dynamo - had real energy - and he worked sixteen hours a day. But as I say, things became obvious to us. We were very, very dissatisfied..... I was beginning to wonder whether anything could be done, you know, because it seemed to me, that was it! Well, I remember one evening when Duncan sat down with me, and I said to him, 'Now look here: let's talk about the movement - and you tell me' Because Duncan was a very old Trotskyist, you know, in the movement probably more or less from its inception - I don't know. But anyway, he started to talk to me, and Hilda Lane was there, and believe me, it was the most depressing evening I think I've spent. Splits, and splits - and when you tried to find out what was the root cause of these splits, where were the theoretical differences and that, it was, as I say, very depressing, and it seemed to me that nothing could be done".

Al Richardson: "It was all sort of personal stuff, was it, and that sort of thing?"

Bert Atkinson: "Well, that's how it struck me, though they always said 'no'. But then, when we came into contact with some Trotskyists there were over at Battersea, we went to hold a meeting over there one night, and I suppose they were members of Harber's group. When I spoke to them, they used to say, 'Well we've big differences with them', but you could never pin them down. And in my opinion (I may be doing them an injustice) I think it was cliquism, more or less absolutely. I can't describe it as anything less, I may be wrong. But what happened was that when we met the W.I.L. we were a bit sceptical of all Trotskyist organisations by that time, and we found that we were very, very pleasantly surprised".¹³¹

Notes

1. Arno Doch-Fleuret, Petrograd Dispatch to the New York *Daily World*, 21st January, 1918; John Reed, Report to the National Executive of the S.L.P. of the USA, 4th May, 1918; R. Minor, New York *Daily World*, 8th February, 1919; A. Ransome, *Six Weeks in Russia in 1919*, London, 1919, pp. 80-1. C.f. D. de Leon, *The Socialist Reconstruction of Society*, 1905.

2. E.g. in *Two Pages from Roman History*, 1902.
3. Frank Maitland, Interview with Sam Bornstein, August, 1976.
4. As yet unpublished in the Pioneer edition of the works of Trotsky's last exile.
5. L.D. Trotsky, Letter to Sumner, 15th April, 1938, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky 1937-8*, New York, 1976, p.316. Among the letters sent by Trotsky to Sumner at this time was one congratulating the W.I.L. for the preface to its edition of his '*The Lessons of Spain: The Last Warning*'. It has yet to be published in the 'Pioneer' edition of the collected works of Trotsky's last exile, for evident factional motives. C.f. J. Haston, Letter to Pablo (M. Raptis), 19th July, 1947, in the *Internal Bulletin* of the R.C.P., p.1.
6. L.D. Trotsky, 'Letter to the Editors of *Challenge of Youth*, 17th November, 1937, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1937-8*, New York, 1976, p.55: 'A Great Achievement', 30th August, 1938, op. cit., p.435.
7. 'Discussions with Trotsky I', 20th March, 1938, op. cit., p.285.
8. Letter to Sumner, 15th April, 1938. Op. cit., pp. 315-6.
9. Including Reg Groves, who was offered the Secretaryship to tempt him into the group, and Bert and May Matlow.
10. Preface to an Untitled Collection of Documents on R.S.L./W.I.L. Relations, *Internal Bulletin* of the W.I.L. (undated, but issued in Summer, 1943), p.2. (emphasis as in original).
11. Jock Haston, Interview with Al Richardson, 30th April, 1978.
12. 'Peace and Unity Agreement', September 1938, v, in the Documents on R.S.L./W.I.L. Relations, *Internal Bulletin* of the W.I.L., p.3. c.f. 'Report on Negotiations with the W.I.L.', *Internal Bulletin* of the R.S.L., p.2.
13. 'Brief Notes on the History of the Left Fraction', p.1.
14. C.C. of the R.S.L., 'On the Necessity for an Independent Bolshevik Leninist Organisation in Britain', 24th July, 1938.
15. Frank Maitland, Interview with Sam Bornstein, August 1976. C.f. 'The Revolution in Britain: Thesis on the Present Situation in Britain Submitted by the R.S.P.', p.4, section 18: 'never must the revolutionary banner be lowered in capitulation to such a party'.
16. 'Statement of the W.I.L. to the International Congress of the IVth International, 1938', in Documents on R.S.L./W.I.L. Relations, *Internal Bulletin* of the W.I.L. p.5.
17. F. Engels, Letter to Bebel, 20th June, 1873, in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Correspondence 1846 - 1895*, London, 1934, p.325.
18. Charles Van Gelderen, Interview with Al Richardson, 4th October, 1979.
19. *Documents of the Fourth International: The Formative Years, 1933 -40*, New York, 1973, pp. 289, 300.
20. C.f. 'C.L.R. James, Noted Negro Militant, to speak on Decline of British Empire', in *Socialist Appeal* (U.S.A.) vol.ii, no. 50, 19th November, 1938, p.4. This was an announcement of a coast-to-coast tour to boost his new book *The Black Jacobins*. He contributed a regular column to the *Socialist Appeal* on the black struggle. His term of service in the U.S.A. was only intended to be temporary. As he described it later: "I was invited to the United States, and I went there at the beginning of 1939, and started to organise the movement. I began to organise, and we began to have something, and as the War continued I did not know what to do, so I discussed with them..... (Raya Dunayevskaya)..... had a tremendous influence on me. If it hadn't been for Raya Dunayevskaya I would have come back to Britain, where I had people, where I had a paper, and where I was known because I was writing cricket for the *Manchester Guardian*. So I thought I ought to go back where the boys were speaking out against the War. But Raya Dunayevskaya had come to the conclusion that I was the man to remain in the United States - a black man who was automatically the leader of the black movement, but whose education was such that he could be head of the Trotskyist movement as a whole. When I was in doubt of whether to go or stay, Raya was insistant that I stay. And when I said that I had no money to live, she said 'Don't worry about money', and for months she got the money for me..... I went to the United States, but with the intention of coming back. I was well established in Britain". (C.L.R. James, Interview with Al Richardson, 8th June, 1986).

21. 'Statement of the W.I.L. to the International Congress of the IVth International', in documents on R.S.L./W.I.L. Relations, Internal Bulletin of the W.I.L., pp. 5-6.
22. Charles Van Gelderen, Interview with Al Richardson, 4th October, 1979.
23. C.f. n. 21, above, p.8.
24. C.f. n. 22, above. This is an assertion that frequently arises, without any real proof. C.f. C. Van Gelderen, 'Vyshinsky Rides Again', in *Red Weekly*, 9th September, 1976, and p.43 above. But the W.I.L. refused to support the project, and expelled Betty Hamilton for trying to canvass for it inside the W.I.L. - 'Reply of the E.C. to Comrade D(avid) F(inch)', Internal Bulletin of the W.I.L., p.7.
25. Charles Van Gelderen, Interview with Al Richardson, 4th October, 1979.
26. Op. cit., n. 19, above, p.270.
27. Op. cit., p.302.
28. 'Britannicus', 'Workers of England Oppose the Boss War', in *Socialist Appeal* (U.S.A.), vol. iii, no. 87, 14th October, 1939, p.4. C.f. also H. Dewar, *Resist the Register*, S.A.W.F. pamphlet, 7th February, 1939; R. Groves, *It is an Imperialist War: A Reply to Laski's Defence of the War*, Home Front Pamphlet. Groves maintained the magazine *Home Front* throughout the war, and was on the executive of the No-Conscription League.
29. David Chalkley, Interview with Al Richardson, 14th November, 1978.
30. W. Hunter, 'Handraisers for the Labour Bureaucracy', in *Labour Review*, January, 1983, p.46.
31. C.f. Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back*, London, 1982, pp. 61-3.
32. 'Resolution of the 15th Congress of the C.P.G.B., Birmingham, 1938', in *Labour Monthly*, vol. xx, no. 12, December, 1938, p.767.
33. J.R. Campbell, 'Left Socialism and the Crisis: A Study in Fifth Column Activity', in *Labour Monthly*, vol. xx, no. 11, November, 1938, pp. 690-8.
34. J. Shields, 'The No-Conscription League', in *Party Organiser*, May, 1939, pp. 7-10: 'The Revolutionary Socialist League is one that has established a factional centre in the Labour Party, under the title of the Militant Labour League. It is small in numbers, but even a poisonous cancer cell can create a dangerous malignant growth if it is not cut right out'. The Communist Party itself, of course, was at that time carrying out entry work on fantastic scale.
35. R. Bishop, 'A People's War Needs a People's Leadership', in *World News and Views*, vol. xix, no. 44, 9th September, 1939, p.963. Picking up scraps of socialist criticism of British imperialism had long been a favourite gambit of German propaganda, and continued throughout the war; it carried no more conviction in this case than their similar denunciations of the horrors of British rule in Africa or India.
36. 'M.L.L. Leads Anti-War Fight on London Trades Council', in *The Militant*, vol. iii, no. 8, 1st January, 1940.
37. 'Leicester Workers Against War', in *The Militant*, 15th January, 1940.
38. Margaret Johns, Interview with Al Richardson, 4th March, 1978.
39. *Socialist Appeal* (U.S.A.), vol. iv, no. 13, 30th March, 1940; P.G. Stevens, 'In the World of Labour: Labour's Ranks in Motion as War Enters New Phase', in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. iv, no. 20, 18th May, 1940, p.4.
40. Ibid. The account appearing in *The Daily Worker*, 26th March, 1940 gives the main voting as 86 to 57, with no mention of Margaret Johns' Trotskyist views.
41. Op. cit., n. 40 above, ibid.
42. 'M.Stanwick, Letter to the Editor, from the E.C. of the Militant Labour League', in *The Militant*, vol. iv, no.1, April 1940, p.2.
43. E.C. Minutes, R.S.L., 15th April, 1940.
44. *Report of the 48th Annual Conference of the Labour Party*, Blackpool, 1949, p.223.
45. John Robinson, Interview with Al Richardson, 3rd June, 1978.
46. 'Soldiers Support Leeds Transport Workers', in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. v, no. 3, December 1942, p.4.
47. Op. cit., n. 45 above.

48. 'Correspondence on Leeds Transport Dispute', in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. v, no. 4, January, 1943.
49. 'Anti War Minority Holding Up Coal Production', in *The Daily Herald*, 10th March, 1943.
50. "The most vicious types of anti working class bodies, for whom the word 'Fascist' would be quite appropriate" - W.H. Wainwright, in *World News and Views*, vol. xxiii, no. 49, 4th December, 1943, p.386; c.f. Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back*, London, 1982, p.116.
51. 'Now and Then', in *The Militant Scottish Miner*, new series, no. 15, May 1943, p.1; *The Daily Herald*, 7th May, 1943; *The Militant Scottist Miner*, new series no. 17, August 1943, p.3.
52. 'The Barometer of Progress', in *The Militant Scottish Miner*, new series no. 17, August, 1943, p.3.
53. H. McShane, 'Union Reveals Activity of Anti-War Disruptors', in *The Daily Worker*, 30th September, 1943.
54. Charles Van Gelderen, Interview with Al Richardson, 4th October, 1979.
55. *Stalinism and Trotskyism in Vietnam*, Spartacist League Pamphlet, New York 1976, pp. 9, 13, etc.
56. L. Goonewardene, *A Short History of the Lanka Samaja Party*, Colombo, 1960, pp. 31 - 5.
57. The P.O.I., the P.C.I., and the Barta ('Union Communiste') Group. Later on a fourth emerged during the war, the Claude ('Octobre') Group.
58. The groups led by Ch'en Tu Hsiu, Wang Fan-Hsi and Peng Shu-Tse. C.f. Peng Pi-Lan, 'Looking Back over My Years with Peng Shu-Tse', in *The Chinese Revolution*, New York, 1972; Wang Fan-Hsi, *Chinese Revolutionary*, Oxford, 1980, pp. 232-9.
59. M. Pablo, 'The Fourth International', in *Towards a History of the Fourth International* New York, 1973, pp. 30-1; P. Frank, *The Fourth International*, London, 1979, p.64; J.J. Marie, *Le Trotskysme*, Paris, 1970, p.74. C.f. 'The National Question: Three Theses by a Group of European Comrades', in *Workers International News*, vol. v, no. 10, April, 1943, pp. 9-11; July/August 1945, pp. 8-10.
60. L.D. Trotsky, *In Defence of Marxism*, New York, 1940; J.P. Cannon, *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party*, New York, 1943.
61. L.D. Trotsky, *In Defence of Marxism*, New Park edition, p.203n; Hic and Craipeau, Report, 7th August, 1940, in the Internal Bulletin, Information Service of the IVth International published by the I.E.C., 18th February, 1941, p.7.
62. Most of the non-Americans could not attend. Of those who could, a majority supported Shachtman's position - Shachtman, Gould, C.L.R. James, and Mario Pedrosa (Brazil).
63. Hic and Craipeau, op. cit., n.61 above
64. L.D. Trotsky, *In Defence of Marxism*, New Park Edition, p.115.
65. Frank Maitland, Interview with Sam Bornstein, August, 1976.
66. 'Statement of the R.S.P., being the Report of Delegates W(illie) T(ait) and F(rank) M(aitland) to the C.C. of the R.S.L., 23rd December, 1938', in Documents on R.S.L./W.I.L. Relations, undated internal bulletin of W.I.L., pp. 9-10.
67. 'Report on the National Conference of the R.S.L.', February 11th and 12th 1939, p.2.
68. E.g. F. Maitland, *Searchlight on the Duchess of Atholl, Secrets of the Second Front*, 16th September, 1942; *North Africa Tangle*, 1943; F.M. and W.T. *Socialism through Victory - Victory for Whom?*; *The Revolution in India*, A.T. Tait Memorial Publication, 1941.
69. *Vote for a Socialist Britain*, leaflet printed and published by W. Tait, C.f. the portion cited by John McNair in 'Fight for Socialism at Edinburgh', in *The New Leader*, vol. xxxiii, no. 40, 13th December, 1941, p.2, and Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back*, London, 1982, p.82.
70. Harry Wicks, Interview with Al Richardson, 11th March and 1st April, 1978.
71. *New Leader*, vol. xxxii, no. 43, 4th January, 1941, p.8.
72. "Reply of W.I.L. to the R.S.L. Criticisms of 'Preparing for Power' ", Joint Discussion Bulletin of the R.S.L. and W.I.L., p.18.
73. *Militant*, vol. iii, no. 3, 20th October, 1939.

74. 'Resolution of E.S.J.', in 'A Circle or a Party?', Bulletin put out by the Leicester Group of the B.S.F.I., pp 14-5.
75. 'Statement by Eight Members of the Hampstead Group', in the 'Special Internal Discussion Bulletin' of the R.S.L., November 1938, p.12.
76. 'Resolution of the C.C. of the Revolutionary Workers League', 27th October, 1939, in Documents on R.S.L./W.I.L. Relations, undated internal bulletin of the W.I.L., p.12.
77. *Militant*, vol. ii, no. 8, March, 1939, p.4.
78. R. Armstrong, 'Against the Slanderers', in *Workers Fight*, vol. ii, no. 3, July 1939, pp. 8-9.
79. R. Armstrong, 'Why We Left the C.P.', in *Workers Fight*, vol. ii, no. 2, May, 1939, p.10. Armstrong's initial reaction to the Trotskyist movement had been very hostile. As Alex Acheson recalls: "At an early meeting of the Trotsky Defence Committee at the Memorial Hall in Farringdon Street people like Gary Allighan and Sidney Silverman had been on the platform, because they all supported the Trotsky Defence Committee. And at the back of the hall where I was sitting was Johnny Campbell of the Communist Party and someone I didn't know. I afterwards found out his name was Armstrong, and (he) had been in the International Brigade. And when it got round to the question of the Spanish Civil War and the 'Trotskyists betraying the Republic to Franco', and answers were given by the Trotsky Defence Committee speakers, this fellow Armstrong began to get hysterical and heckled. And it was explained that 'here was a victim of the Trotskyist treachery in Spain'. He had been in the International Brigade and had been badly wounded and he knew because he had been there that Trotskyists were wreckers and agents of Franco". (Alex Acheson, Interview with Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, 12th June, 1986).
80. The C.C. report to the 1937 Congress of the C.P.G.B. put the pamphlet's sales at 131,000 - *It Can Be Done*, 1937, p. 250.
81. Bert Atkinson, Interview with Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, 4th November, 1977.
82. Ibid.
83. Bert Atkinson, Discussion with Al Richardson, 29th October, 1977.
84. Op. cit., n.81 above
85. Op. cit., n.83 above C.f. 'Islington C.P. Splits on Spain Issue', in *Workers Weekly*, 1st May, 1939, p.7.
86. Op. cit., n.78 above. Bill Bailey was even expelled from the National Unemployed Workers Movement, though he had been arrested several times for agitating on its behalf. Editorial *Workers Fight*, vol. ii, no. 3, July 1939, pp. 2-3.
87. M. Farrell, *Northern Ireland: The Orange State*, London, 1976, p.152.
88. Arthur Shute, Conversation with Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, 4th April, 1986.
89. Editorial, *Workers Fight*, vol. ii, no. 3, July 1939, p.1.
90. 'Parliamentary Debates: Fifth Series', vol. 349 (9th volume of the session 1938-9), 29th June, 1939, 651-2.
91. *An Irish Revolutionary in Court*, F.O.T.I.R. pamphlet, 1939. 'Irish Speaker Insulted Flag', in *The Evening Standard*, 22nd July, 1939; 'Arrested Man Called to Irish Guardsman', in *The Star*, 22nd July, 1939, p.7.
92. Seamus MacMurry, Letter to *Workers Fight*, vol. ii, no. 4, September 1939, p.3.
93. 'Murderers' Cry at Irish Meeting in Hyde Park', in *The Evening Standard*, 27th July, 1939; 'Hyde Park Crowd in Angry Scene', in *The Evening News*, 27th July, 1939, p.1.; 'Irish Flag Scene in Hyde Park', in *The Star*, 27th July, 1939, p. 3.
94. *An Irish Revolutionary in Court*, F.O.T.I.R. pamphlet, 1939, p.1.
95. 'Arrested Man Called to Irish Guardsman', in *The Star*, 22nd July, 1939, p.7. C.f. 'Irish Speaker Insulted Flag', in *The Evening Standard*, 22nd July, 1939. Murphy held the normal Marxist view of individual terrorism: as far as he was concerned, the I.R.A. 'tries to arouse the Irish masses into action by their futile bombings hoping at the same time to frighten the British bourgeoisie into carrying out their demands. But methods such as these have just the opposite effect - it allows the Irish people to become apathetic, believing the I.R.A. will free them, whilst it delivers into the hands of the British boss class the best of the Irish Revolutionaries and alienates the sympathy of the workers of England'. (J. Murphy, 'Why a New Irish Party?', in *Workers Fight*, vol. ii, no. 2, May 1939, p.3.).

96. *Documents of the Fourth International : The Formative Years, 1933-40*, New York, 1973, pp. 296-9; I. Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast*, Oxford, 1963; paperback edition, 1970. n.1, p.421.
97. The statement of D. Singer, that the Second World War was "one of the very few wars Isaac was ready to assume as his own" ('Armed with a Pen', in D. Horowitz, editor, *Isaac Deutscher - The Man and His Work*, London, 1971, p.38) was not Deutscher's view at the time at all, whatever it may have become later. C.f Josef Bren, 'The Angels and the Devil', in *Workers Fight*, new series, no. 5, May 1940, p.2: "this is not a war between democratic angels and fascist Devils, nor is it a war for the rights of small nations, but exclusively a war for profits, waged by trusts and cartels, at the expense of the workers of all countries". These remarks, made in the context of the violation of Norwegian neutrality by both sides, show that Deutscher was far from the views of the modern Communist Party as to the nature of the Second World War. Deutscher's inner party pseudonym was Phillippe. As Alex Acheson remembers him:
 "It was at the time of the Blackout when I first met him. I went up to Hilda Lane's. I was then in the army, so it was about October 1940. I was introduced to somebody whom I knew as 'Phillippe', and this turned out to be a Polish comrade whom I subsequently learned had been in the Polish Communist Party, and had broken with Stalinism, and was none other than Isaac Deutscher, who was earning a precarious living doing some journalistic work. I only met him once". (Alex Acheson, Interview with Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, 12th June, 1986).
98. 'Resolution on the Unification of the British Section', in *Documents of the Fourth International: The Formative Years 1933-40*, New York, 1973, p.359. Many of the younger members of the R.W.L. had been demoralised by its failure of nerve at the start of the war as for example Alex Acheson:
 "But when the War came I disagreed with Hilda Lane and Bill Duncan, because they said that it would not be fair to issue an anti-war proclamation and involve members who might be opposed to it, and those, like Hilda Lane, with a family. It would be unfair if they were imprisoned for anti-war activity and their children suffered. I was so incensed by this, that when I got home I used an old hectograph, a filthy old duplicator, and produced an anti-war leaflet in the name of the Trotskyist movement, to make sure that the Trotskyist position on the Imperialist War was made public. My wife, who was non-political, helped me to produce it. She had the courage that some of my comrades hadn't. I have to say this, because it was something that made me admire my wife for her courage in doing this". (Alex Acheson, Interview with Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, 12th June, 1986).
99. *Workers International News*, vol. iii, no. 6, June 1940, p.8. The W.I.L. had been exercising an attraction upon the members of the R.W.L. for some time. C.f. Kemshead, Letter to Alex Acheson (undated, but about May, 1940): "the best and most numerous forces in the movement are centering around W(I.L.). From Milly (i.e. the M.L.L.) she is recruiting right and left - Nottingham and many other provincial branches - and more in London. We stated that we retracted none of our criticisms but proposed entry as individuals to co-operate in strengthening Winnie (W.I.L.) and making her the British S(ection). We felt that here was a basic agreement on the programme and general agreement on the tactics and that a contribution was demanded from us to unity - even such a one as this".
100. 'Gradjine', 'Who Speaks for Bolshevism?', Internal document of the R.S.L., 19th November, 1942.
101. 'Private Cliff Stanton Court Martialled', in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. v, no. 21, mid April 1944.
102. 'Our Present Tasks', January 1940; 'F' (Cooper), 'B' (Sid Bone) and 'E' (Fred Emmett), 'For the Building of the British Section of the Fourth International', 30th April., 1941. p.2.
103. Circular of the E.C. of the R.S.L., 26th February, 1941.
104. E.C. Minutes of the R.S.L., 4th May, 1942; 17th May, 1942; 17th April, 1943;
105. 'The Leninist Fraction' (i.e. 'Left'), 'Chauvinism and the Right Wing', undated internal document of the R.S.L.; S.S.G., 'Factual Report of the Meeting Held at Croydon on Sunday, March 14th between members living in the S.E. and S.W. London of the R.S.L., S.W.G. and the W.I.L.', p.1.

106. Above, p.34.
107. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the R.S.L., 23rd March, 1940.
108. Quoted in "reply of the W.I.L. to the R.S.L. Criticisms of 'Preparing for Power' ", Internal Bulletin of the R.S.L./W.I.L., p.19. C.f. W. Hunter, 'Some Aspects of the Early Years of British Trotskyism', in *Labour Review*, June 1977, p.14 n.
109. 'Resolution on National Defence', endorsed by the C.C. of the R.S.L., 22nd August, 1942.
110. Resolution passed by the C.C. of the R.S.L., 19th July, 1942; 'Statement of the Seven Expelled Members'.
111. Harber and the 'Left' preferred to call it the 'Right' (or even 'W.I.L.') Faction.
112. C.f. 'Copy of a letter from Stuart (Sam Gordon) to J(ohn) L(awrence), 4th February, 1943', in Documents on the R.S.L./W.I.L. Relations, p.14; 'Statement of a Minority in the T.O.', August, 1943, pp. 1-2. This minority, consisting of Rose Carson and Mildred Fallerman, joined the W.I.L.
113. The E.C. meeting of May 25th, 1940 decided to publish a 'theoretical propaganda journal' as a 'Bulletin of the Fourth International', which appeared in June 1940, C.f. *Revolution*, 'Organ of the Socialist Workers League (undated) and Leicester Group B.S.F.I.', 'A Circle or a Party?', pp. 4,7: the advertisement in *The Militant*, vol. iii, no. 7, 1st January, 1940, p.4, refers to an earlier attempt to do the same thing which did not actually materialise. But on August 23rd a special E.C. meeting struck off Margaret Johns to write a pamphlet on the death of Trotsky in the joint names of 'The European Secretariat' and 'The British Section' which appeared over Starkey Jackson's name as publisher. C.f. Minutes of the Special E.C. of the R.S.L., 23rd August, 1940 and *Leon Trotsky, 1879-1940* (the pamphlet in question).
114. 'Bolshevism and Defencism', Internal Bulletin of the R.S.L., May 1941; Leicester Group, B.S.F.I., 'A Circle or a Party?'; 'Brief Notes on the History of the Left Fraction'. p.2.
115. Marc Loris, Letter to J.L.R., 15th July, 1943.
116. Resolution of the I.S., 26th September, 1943; C.f. W. Hunter, 'Some Aspects of the Early Years of British Trotskyism', in *Labour Review*, new series, vol. i, no. 1, June 1977, p.16.
117. 'The Present Situation and Our Tasks', document of the E.C. of the R.S.L., 27th January, 1943.
118. C.C. Minutes, R.S.L., 29th March, 1942: "it is of very little value to outside contacts"; Ted Grant, Letter to the Secretary of the R.S.L., 3rd April, 1943.
119. Margaret Johns, Interview with Al Richardson, 4th March, 1978.
120. 'Political Resolution for the National Conference of the R.S.L., 28th March, 1942', p.4, E.S.J(ackson), 'On the Fourth International Military Policy', Internal document of the R.S.L., 6th October, 1941.
121. *Socialist Appeal* vol. v, no. 6, March, 1943.
122. S.G. Letter to the W.I.L, 6th March, 1943 in 'Recent Correspondence with the W.I.L.' Internal Bulletin of the R.S.L., 16th July, 1943; Ted Grant, Letter to the Secretary of the R.S.L., 3rd April, 1943; R.S.L., Letter to the W.I.L., 7th May, 1943.
123. 'An Answer to the Charges of the Left', Internal Bulletin of the R.S.L.
124. Marx and Engels, 'The Alleged Splits in the International', in *The First International and After*, (Penguin edition), p.298.
125. Letter to Schweitzer, 13th October, 1868, op. cit., n.124 above, p. 155.
126. D.D.H., 'On the Attitude of Our Movement Towards the War'.
127. J.L. 'Once Again on Workers Control', p.2.
128. 'Political Statement of the R.S.L.', 1941, p.3. C.f. Editorial, *Militant Scottish Miner*, new series, no. 19, October 1943, p.2.
129. 'Reply to the Political Statement of the R.S.L., 1941', Internal Bulletin of the W.I.L.
130. E.L.D(avis), 'On negotiations with the W.I.L.' Internal Bulletin of the R.S.L., 3rd February, 1943.
131. Bert Atkinson, Interview with Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, 4th November, 1977.

Chapter Three

Preparing for Power: The W.I.L. 1941 - 1944

The logic of events since the start of the War had shifted the W.I.L. from being an entrism organisation to one whose main thrust was in the trade unions. The suspension of life inside the Labour Party¹ and heightened exploitation of war production made the trade unions the focus of working class life in a way they had never quite been before.² Thousands of people - such as the women drafted into industry to replace labour taken into the forces - were having their first taste of factory work, and were joining trades unions in large numbers. It was a time of tremendous activity within the trade union movement. "Between mid 1943 and the landing in France on 6th June 1944, there were as many strikes as in the worst period of the first war", comments A.J.P. Taylor.³ By then W.I.L. was recruiting almost exclusively from the shop floor, and was growing by leaps and bounds. Now that viable trade union fractions had been painfully built up, a concentration on Labour Party work and away from industry would have been to miss a golden opportunity. "Under the circumstances" ran a conference document in 1942, "total submersion into the Labour Party could serve only to separate the revolutionaries from the real struggles of the workers. Such a perspective is farcical, and can only serve as a cloak for complete inactivity".⁴ At the same time, after Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941, the Communist Party was promoting industrial exploitation with such zeal that it began to come into conflict with the class feelings of its more sensitive members, who began to gravitate into the orbit of W.I.L. They were attracted because the W.I.L. opposed both the electoral truce and the shackling of the trade unions to the war machine, and had some sort of industrial basis. Since W.I.L.'s new recruits were mostly from the Communist Party (and many of the remainder from the I.L.P.), this also had an effect upon the W.I.L.'s Labour Party Perspective, which now began to fade into the background.

As the W.I.L. did not hold a National Conference until 1942, it is not entirely clear how they dropped the active operation of the entry tactic, and

no perspectives document was put forward to alter it. An article demanding the ending of the political truce with the Tories and the coming to power of the Labour Party appearing in *Socialist Appeal* approved of "the statement issued by the Workers International League (Trotskyist)" which was issued at the June 1941 Labour Party Conference, showing that by then the group's pretence at entry was wearing a bit thin.⁵

Unlike the Communist Party, the W.I.L. was not taken unawares when Hitler invaded the Soviet Union in June, 1941.⁶ Nor was it taken aback at the sudden change of political and industrial policy that this organisation would be obliged to undertake. "Tomorrow, if Stalin makes an agreement with the Democracies", warned Gerry Healy, "Dutt would once again outstrip his friends of yesterday in denunciation of the barbarities of German Fascism".⁷ Although Haston learned of Hitler's attack on Russia whilst in jail, the W.I.L. sprang into action. "Almost immediately after the outbreak of the conflict on the Eastern Front", ran a later account, "a General Members' Meeting in the London area was called and a circular was issued by the E.C. on the organisational steps to be taken in the new situation. It was stated that the main task before the organisation was 'the turn towards the C.P. rank and file'. This necessitated a change in our organisational outlook. Instead of directing C.P. contacts towards the Labour Party to carry on activity as we do normally do with new contacts, we were to appeal to them as an organisation of the Fourth International; in other words, we were to devote a section of the group towards the carrying out of independent activity, whilst the remaining portion of our membership carried out work in the mass political organisations". The immediate result was that "our membership was quick to realise our opportunities and the circulation of our press was trebled with comparative ease. Locals, which before were selling only a few dozen copies per month, now order their supplies in hundreds, and the general tone of their reports is that they hope before long to transform this into thousands".⁸

As young comrades, several of them still unemployed, toured up and down the country keeping contact with local groups, propagating ideas and recruiting members, the change in the organisation became clearly reflected in its press. In June 1941 *Youth for Socialism* became a four-page newspaper addressed to the broader labour movement with the title of *Socialist Appeal*, which by mid-March 1943 was coming out bi-monthly,⁹ and was selling on a run of 12,000 copies.¹⁰ In two and a half months 45 members joined,¹¹ and by the end of 1943 numbers had passed the three hundred mark.¹² Most of these recruits came from the Communist Party, which although reaching its highest ever membership figure at that time, did so by taking in middle class, right wing and patriotic elements, who could combine worship of the Red Army abroad with enthusiasm for scabbing and speed-up at home. The rapid influx of such people only further increased the disquiet of the more trade union orientated workers who, confused and demoralised, began to leave in disgust.

The W.I.L. directed its propaganda right at these people from the start. An emergency duplicated leaflet warned that "while remaining the devoted defender of the conquests of October, now, more than ever, the international proletariat must safeguard its complete political independence from Soviet diplomacy which will demand of the workers to support the capitalist allies of the Soviet Union" and that "the proletariat of a capitalist country which finds itself in alliance with the U.S.S.R. must remain fully and completely in irreconcilable hostility to the imperialist government of its own country".¹³ The industrial lessons of the new Communist Party turn were drawn even before the Communist Party itself had worked them out. "To support Churchill" stated *Socialist Appeal*, "means to act as strikebreakers for the bosses and help to impose a reactionary regime in Britain", so that "Communist Party militants must act as bosses' agents in imposing speed-up and all the other impositions on the shoulders of the workers".¹⁴ Seldom in political life can there ever have been a statement that was more prophetic.¹⁵ But the ruthless policies pursued by the Communist Party in industry from 1941 onwards began to impose a fresh strain on the loyalty of its more class-conscious members, and to them W.I.L. appealed:

"Comrades of the Communist Party, the fight to defend the Soviet Union can only be waged by conducting a struggle for workers' power".¹⁶

It was, of course, necessary to make a more in-depth analysis of the Communist Party's contention that the War had now changed its class character as far as Britain was concerned. This task was undertaken by Andrew Paton in two pamphlets put out in 1941. In the first he went over Lenin's ideas on imperialist war to prove that "pacts do not make the 'class differences' that Lenin postulates", and denied that the war of the superpowers had suddenly become "just - by contagion". "Does Dutt really believe", he asked, "does he expect any serious - thinking workers to believe that Churchill and the British capitalist class are now waging a 'just war' for the liberation of the peoples against German Fascism?" The nub of the question was that:

"The war of the Russian masses is just and for the defence of the fundamental gains of October. But it does not affect, in the smallest degree, the unjust, oppressive war for the domination of the world which is being fought by Germany on the one side and Britain and America on the other".¹⁷

The second pamphlet showed clearly on how many occasions in the past the C.P. had changed its line on the War and justified it by Marxist phrases, and how as late as the previous year they had "called for peace on Hitler's terms", and "exonerated Hitler and blamed the British".¹⁸

But none of this admirable propaganda would have had the slightest

effect if it had not been linked with activity in the factories and a policy for the War. In industry the War was linked up with the question of workers' control, since "British millionaires pile up profits whilst British soldiers go to the front ill-equipped",¹⁹ whilst *Socialist Appeal* had "consistently put forward a proletarian military policy whereby the workers will be enabled to wage a genuine revolutionary war against Hitlerism and every other brand of Fascism".²⁰

The grasp of the essentials of Stalinism that this general polemic gave to the W.I.L. was vital within industry and the trade unions. Here they were not only up against an apparatus elaborated by the Communist Party, over a generation, but there were also other new mechanisms of class collaboration, the 'Joint Production Committees'. The W.I.L. understood that abstention from these only meant leaving the workers caught up in them completely under the sway of Stalinism, and they intervened whenever they could. When the Production conference of the Shop Stewards' National Council met at the Stoll Theatre on October 19th, 1941²¹ W.I.L. supporters went along as branch delegates, along with all the others, to put the case against production committees. Their resolution made it clear that:

"Recent investigations into the mismanagement and productive capacity of the war industries have completely demonstrated to many workers the inability of capitalist methods to overcome the prevailing anarchy and chaos.

We therefore demand of our Labour and trade union leaders that they immediately implement their talk of 'public ownership' by some determined action. This means that they must at once institute a campaign for the expropriation of the War industries without compensation; for workers' control of the industry under state ownership and for the planning of profitless production in the interests of the community".²²

As for the policy the Communists were trying to promote, "where production committees are set up", maintained a W.I.L. member, "the bosses will attempt to use them as a means to paralysing independent action on the part of the working class and the working class can only agree to production committees if they are under their control. The bosses will make use of the workers on the committees precisely as the capitalist government uses the Labour leaders to impose restrictive legislation which would not otherwise be possible".²³ The slogan to counterpose to the production committees was that of 'Workers' Control' from the *Transitional Programme*. As Rachel Ryan, W.I.L. delegate from the West London Area Shop Stewards' Committee, made clear, there were only two alternative methods of effective control over the productive process: "the one alternative is that of Nazi Germany, where production is organised through the destruction of working class rights. The other alternative is the

establishment of workers' control, which would not only increase production but also safeguard and extend the rights we have won through years of struggle. If this conference gives a lead, and I hope that it will, for a movement in the trade unions and factories for the control of production through factory committees, it would be the first serious blow struck against Fascism and in defence of the Soviet Union".²⁴ The platform's reply was a predictable one: Len Powell pointed out that "the Red Army are not demanding that we expropriate our war industries", and Walter Swanson declared that "our chance of having Socialism in this country is bound up with the defence of the Soviet Union. That is the great job of the moment". But however much the C.P. may have felt that the conference was "particularly useful" in "clearing up" the "confusion on the rôle of production committees, and a tendency to think that workers' control should be raised as an issue now",²⁵ these issues were to surface again in many industries in the years following, wherever there were Trotskyists there to raise them.

The intervention in the Stoll Conference and the growth of Trotskyist influence at shop floor level began to alarm the Communist leaders, and they prepared a witch-hunt in collaboration with the lowest levels of the Rothermere Press. The *Sunday Dispatch* of the 9th November had already shown a suspiciously close knowledge of the Stalinist viewpoint when it noted that "orthodox Communists are now supporting the war effort", and made a mistake a Trotskyist source would never make by fathering the slogan of a 'People's Government' upon the Trotskyists.²⁶ A week later an article appeared quoting from the draft of a leaflet that was still circulating inside the Communist Party and had not yet been published.²⁷ When the leaflet did appear it described Trotskyists as "more deadly than paratroopers because their disguise is more cunning", "despicable traitors" with "poison papers" with whom "no worker should have anything else to do", and ended with an open incitement to violence against them:

"They are a virus that must be cleared out of all contact with working class organisations:

TREAT A TROTSKYIST AS YOU WOULD A NAZI".²⁸

The fact that this had been quoted in a bourgeois paper before it had even been issued was not missed by the W.I.L. "Is it not worthy of note that the *Sunday Dispatch* obtained access to this document?", asked *Socialist Appeal*, "and does it not suggest that this was provided by the C.P. leadership which has not hesitated at using the gutter press to attack genuine Leninists?"²⁹ Ted Grant replied by an open letter to the Communist Party on November 25th, 1941:

"We denounce your assertions that the Trotskyists are, or ever have been, agents or supporters of Nazism or Fascism. Further, we challenge you to substantiate this document in public debate before

the members of your party and the workers of Britain..... We are holding a meeting on December 21st at the Holborn Hall, at 6.30 p.m., to expose the slanders of the pro-Fascist *Sunday Dispatch* and of the Communist Party. An opportunity will be given to any spokesman of the Communist Party whom you would like to nominate to justify your statements, Failure to avail yourself of this opportunity will brand you as slanderers and deceivers of the working class".³⁰

The Communist reply was not to take up the offer - they would be providing the audience and the W.I.L. would be providing the politics - but to renew the slander in their propaganda. J.R. Campbell threw all restraint to the winds, describing Trotskyists as "agents of the Gestapo in the labour movement", "loathsome political degenerates" whose demand for a Labour government was "playing Hitler's game" of neglecting "the essential task of mobilising the British people to fight with all their strength alongside the Soviet Union". And when we consider Campbell's particular rôle in defending the Moscow Trials, it shakes the imagination to learn that "nine tenths" of the Trotskyist papers "are devoted to imitating Goebbels".

Even today, when a generation has passed that allows us to exercise some detachment, the excess of vituperation comes as a bit of a shock, and cries out for an explanation. In this case the key is supplied by the contents of the rest of the article, which consists of Campbell's detailed strategy for an attack upon working conditions and an increase in production. He obviously understood that only Marxists would be able to provide leadership to the working class in the conditions in which they had been deserted by their official Labour and trade union leaders, and were now exposed to the attacks of the C.P. as well. It was for this reason that Campbell finished his article with a call to the employers and their allies, the trade union bureaucrats, for the purge of the Trotskyists:

"The Hess men of Trotsky, traitors of the Soviet Union, saboteurs of production, must be driven out of the workshops and out of the labour movement. Then cleansed of Fifth Column infection, the movement can go forward to lead the British people to victory over Fascism".³¹

If the employers and Labour leaders were slow to take up the call, the C.P. was not. Already by December 1941 an official Y.C.L. branch circular was complaining that "we are far too tolerant with these people" who were "allowed to sell their paper *Socialist Appeal* outside meetings".³² It was the signal for a campaign of thuggery against W.I.L. newspaper sellers, to impede the circulation of their material or to get them arrested for causing a disturbance. Only a few examples are necessary to illustrate the technique.

When the Communist Party held a meeting addressed by Peter Kerrigan and Rose Smith at the Aston Hippodrome, the W.I.L. arrived with their

papers. Minutes later they were told to clear off and take their "Fascist rag" with them. When they refused, an attack was made on them to snatch their papers, with local C.P. divisional organiser Sam Blackwell leading the van. In the tussle that followed the Communists even appealed to the police to remove the Trotskyists, but they refused.³³ Similar incidents took place in Liverpool,³⁴ and in Battersea, Jimmy Dicks was even assaulted in the course of a trade union branch meeting.³⁵ Some of the worst experiences were in the Midlands.³⁶ But far from exciting a pogrom atmosphere against the Trotskyists, these assaults disturbed strongly held feelings of labour movement democracy amongst the working class, and only elicited sympathy for the Trotskyists, and curiosity about what they had to say. This comes out of an experience had by Pat MacVeigh:

"Then I went down to London - that would be '42 or '43 - I was on a visit to my sister, and I remember I went to a rally in Trafalgar Square. This was a C.P. rally, and I saw a chap there selling a paper called *Socialist Appeal*, and he was being mobbed - I mean physically molested - by women, mainly by women (these were mainly Jewish women - Zionist women - who could become rather rabidly hysterical). I remember one of them grabbed a paper from him and painted a big swastika on it with lipstick and then paraded in front of him. And then some people came and threatened to beat him up, and I instinctively - it was an instinct (of course political understanding had a part to play with it) and I thought this was all wrong, and of course I said 'Well, if you want to beat him up, you have got to beat me up'. And that was really my first acquaintance with the old Workers International League. The man who was selling the papers was Jock Haston".³⁷

Constitutional methods were not neglected in the effort to silence the Trotskyists. A prolonged campaign was waged to get Sid Bidwell off the Southall Trades Council, where he was a delegate from the local N.U.R. The trades council had delegated him to speak at an 'Aid Russia' meeting, where he took the opportunity to contrast the Russian resistance to Hitler with the collapse of the French, explaining this by the fact that since the Russian Revolution the workers there felt they had something to fight for. The Communists chose to interpret this as an "attack" of "cheap sneers" upon the Soviet workers, and on November 9th, 1941 the Secretary of Hayes E.T.U. circulated a letter calling for his removal. "The trades council should not, at this stage of history, tolerate the disruption of national unity", he wrote, "the members of the Fourth International have been proved, by history, the avowed agents of Fascism and the enemies of the working class". So the Communists packed the next trades council meeting with delegates who for the most part had not turned up before, and removed Bidwell by a vote of 13 to 8. The Woodcutters' Society, the A.E.U. and Bidwell's own N.U.R. branch vehemently protested at this attempt to

censor the delegate of a labour movement institution. His own branch described it as “an affront to this branch and organisation”, and circulated in reply a letter countersigned by the Union’s London District General Secretary speaking highly of his career in the union (ex-Assistant Secretary of the London District Council), his nomination as delegate to the 1942 Labour Party Conference, his “spirited articles on current T.U. and political matters” and his dedication to the workers’ cause. It had no effect at all on the C.P., who had not hesitated to create ill-feeling between the different trades in pursuit of their own ends, but it did show the esteem in which the railwaymen held their Trotskyist representative.³⁸

In De Havillands, in Edgware, the Communists even went to the lengths of spreading a story that Roy Tearse had been seen before the War selling *Action* in a black shirt in Kensington High Street. After a while the whispering campaign began to wear a bit thin, and when Tearse was standing for re-election as shop steward, a Communist was given ‘the bum’s rush’ out of the department by Tearse’s workmates for “just coming in telling bloody lies”. But despite an uphill battle, the W.I.L. began to score some spectacular successes:

“Where I worked, in De Havillands, it was completely dominated by the Communist Party - that’s where *The New Propellor* began - but by the time I left there were substantial sections of the Shop Stewards’ Committee who were either members or sympathisers of the Workers International League. There were three Edgware branches of the A.E.U. at that time. The first one, Edgware No.1, was chaired by Wal Hannington, and that was the first branch I belonged to when I joined the A.E.U. The second one was Edgware No.2. and it was chaired by Jock Dunbar..... And of course due to the large recruitment of members into the A.E.U. they had to form an Edgware 3rd branch. This became a battlefield between the Trotskyists and the Stalinists. Old George Phippen, who was one of the old N.C.L.C. organisers, said that the Edgware 3rd branch was the best attended branch meeting he went to. The room was packed every night, and we used to have debates. Eventually the C.P. used to send the big guns, the National Organisers, to really get rid of the Trotskyists. But in the end I was the Chairman, the Secretary was a member of the Workers International League, and everybody down to the two old doorkeepers were supporters”.³⁹

The first success of the Trotskyists, in the workplace, that came to the attention of the public was in the Royal Ordnance Factory in Nottingham. Early in the War the W.I.L. had recruited Bill Elliot, Convenor of the Royal Ordnance Factory in Enfield, and through him an exceptional group of militants in Nottingham - the branch chairman, Nightingale, the branch secretary, Claude Bartholomew, the factory convenor, John Pemberton, and several of the shop stewards. When the Minister of Labour tried to

transfer some of the men to private enterprise at a lower rate of pay, they called a two-day sit-in strike for Saturday, April 18th, 1942. Bartholomew got out a memorandum saying that the men would not budge unless hotels were commandeered for the use of transferred workers, that skilled men should be pooled for the common needs of the ordnance factories, that the quota system should be used for transfers, and that no transfers should take place for more than six months without the consent of the men involved, and then only to factories with comparable conditions. The shop stewards were to be consulted about all transfers, which were only to take place between factories of the R.O.F. group. The response of the Communists was to draw the attention of the authorities to the activity of the Trotskyists in the factory and the R.O.F. group in general.⁴⁰ The cue for a witch-hunt was taken up by a Tory M.P. who claimed to be outraged by an article in *Socialist Appeal* attacking British Imperialism, which he claimed was an attempt to undermine confidence in the armed forces.⁴¹ On April 30th, 1942, Sir J. Lucas, M.P. for Portsmouth South, asked the Home Secretary in the House of Commons whether, "in view of the fact that this paper attacks our allies, and war aims, and is entirely subversive, can the Right Hon. Gentleman state any good reason for allowing it to continue?" Herbert Morrison's reply was non-committal, that he was considering all the circumstances.⁴² From that point Scotland Yard began to investigate the W.I.L. more thoroughly than it had in the past. For as the War went on the level of political confrontation inside the Royal Ordnance factories increased. In June 1943 a strike in the Nottingham R.O.F. came to the notice of the Home Secretary⁴³, and at the time of the imprisonment of the R.C.P. leaders the *Daily Mail* reported that the workers there were contributing ½d. a week from their wages to the Militant Workers Federation.⁴⁴

This high level of organisation and political consciousness was reflected in pay and conditions. The Nottingham R.O.F. had been the first of the new group of R.O.F. factories to come into production, as early as 1937, and "worked at full pressure throughout the years of the War".⁴⁵ Yet the trade union organisation, with its Trotskyist leadership, stood up to the pressure in a remarkable way. There was resistance to dilution from the beginning, and as late as 1942 women dilutees were still not allowed to use precision measuring instruments.⁴⁶ In Mid June 1942 the unions were still resisting the order for the transference of their men that had provoked the sit-in strike in April.⁴⁷ The A.E.U. refused to discuss matters affecting their members alone on general works' committees until 1944, and resisted the formation of a joint factory committee representing the shop stewards and the management until the very end of the War.⁴⁸ As a result, pay and conditions in the R.O.F. led those in the whole group. Average piece work balances in R.O.F. Nottingham in 1942 were 218 per cent compared with only 41 per cent at Spennymoor in Country Durham. Some men in Nottingham were earning £4 10s 0d to £5 on a 10½ - hour shift.⁴⁹ Although wages in the Midlands generally tended to be higher than in the rest of the country,

“piece work prices at Nottingham were very high”, and there was a long queue of people trying to get jobs there.

The Trotskyist leadership in the factory - Pemberton, Bartholomew and Nightingale was a remarkable team. Jack Pemberton was a “superb convenor”, and it was he who had first brought the others into the W.I.L., and then the R.C.P., and made the contact with the other R.O.F. factories that gave the Trotskyists the leadership of the national R.O.F. Shop Stewards’ Committee.⁵⁰ Claude Bartholomew “would have stood out anywhere”; a list of his labour movement functions includes Secretary of the R.O.F. Shop Stewards Committee, President of his A.E.U. branch, E.C. member of Nottingham Trades Council, and Shop Stewards’ representative on the Notts District Committee of the A.E.U.⁵¹ The situation inside the Royal Ordnance Factories certainly produced men of exceptional ability, without whom conditions could very easily have deteriorated very badly during the War. As the official history admitted, it was “impossible to plan very far ahead” in modern world war production, work could not be “conducted upon any standardized or stereotyped plan for very long”, and production was governed by “perpetual improvisation and hastily devised expedients”.⁵² The R.O.F.s were all on ‘payment by results’ - “piece-work, or rather, group-work”, and the whole art lay in how you calculated the rate for jobs whose organisation, production rates and norms were constantly changing. The shop stewards’ organisation had to be able to make snap decisions and to be in constant touch with both management and men, calling for extremes of dedication to the interests of the workforce and a real skill in assessing the problems created by each new situation.

R.O.F. Nottingham, nonetheless, was one of the most efficient of the R.O.F. group, and specialised in gun production, turning out in the course of the War, 13,000 guns of all calibres, 23,500 gun barrels, thousands of gun-mountings, major gun-forgings, and up to 60,000 spare parts.⁵³ But it also produced the highest expression of the working class struggle during the Second World War, and the only known example of workers’ control to have emerged during that time. As Jock Haston recalls:

“I remember one situation - I think, a very interesting one, in view of the Communist Party line that we were sabotaging production - in which they had an order for guns - I think they were anti-aircraft guns (I’m not too sure about that) - but they were going from the Ordnance Factory to Russia, and the line of the Communist Party was that they produce the guns and give up all the restrictions that the unions had imposed in any shape or form, that they work all the hours that God sends to actually turn them out. The traditional members of the A.E.U. took a standard A.E.U. line. They were against any form of dilution or flexibility. And Pemberton put forward the line which we had, namely, that we would undertake the production of the arms on time, providing a number of things were done, namely, that the

workers should have complete control of the process, that we should determine the pace, etc., etc. And in the end that is what happened, and the guns were produced on time. But Pemberton had a very good grasp of organising the work and getting the work done, and the workers eventually supported Pemberton's view on that as well".⁵⁴

This workers' control situation, of course, lasted only a short time, but it was a total one. The management had allowed the men to do it, hoping that they would fail and discredit the trade union organisation; and had retired to their offices. The trade unions determined the pace of production, and even set the rates of pay for the job. They even took over the running of the works' canteen. Percy Downey in Birmingham was in touch with the Nottingham comrades, and he also recalls some details:

"There was a good group there, mainly working in the Royal Ordnance Factory, and I think it all showed up. The Shop Stewards' Convenor Pemberton, and the other shop stewards, had a good record there. They were concerned with production, and wanted to get more. The shop stewards wanted a complete change of production - Pemberton got his own office and the shop stewards took control of production. And in doing this they strengthened their own organisations, and I suppose you can say this was the first instance of workers' management, insofar as, rather than control production, they managed it..... This was the report given by Pemberton..... at one of our National Conferences. We met as a Divisional Council. It was discussed quite a lot. It was in a report given by Pemberton at one of our national conferences. They had the job of raising production, and as a result of it increased their wages, commensurate..... They were very concerned about getting production for the Second Front. Our comrades got control of the whole of production".⁵⁵

This achievement of the British Trotskyists remains unnoticed in any of the standard Labour Movement histories written by the Communists or their fellow travellers, and in the conditions of government arms production in wartime it was not information that was likely to get out much. Yet it is a clear illustration of the principle that at the highest point of industrial conflict the highest political level is also reached, and at that point the different parts of a political programme start to fuse together when theory and practice do the same. In this case we had all the preconditions, both material and ideological. There was a very well organised factory, in which the trade union leadership was highly capable, and enjoyed great prestige among the workforce. There was the influence of Trotskyist ideas - the demand for Workers' Control, the Defence of the Soviet Union, the Workers' Military Policy in the Second World War, the defence of existing organisation and conditions - all coming together at the same point. Here

were present all the signs of the continued development of the movement, and the beginnings of real opportunities for success.

But the R.O.F. factories, being state-owned, were in a sense apart from the rest of the organisation of the A.E.U. under Communist control, and in any case the end of the war was near. The opportunities were never realised, and even the word did not get around much. In 1946 the whole organisation of the Trotskyists in the Notts R.O.F. collapsed, when Pemberton came to London.

For a while Alec Riach from Dalmuirs' regained the leadership of the R.O.F. Shop Stewards Committee, but by then the R.C.P. was in a state of disintegration.⁵⁶ Bartholomew left the engineering industry, and became self-employed.⁵⁷ Many years later, when Ken Coates was expelled from Nottingham Labour Party in 1965, Nightingale had been brought along by the party bosses and told "a lot of fibs", and voted for his expulsion. But as soon as he realised what had happened, as Coates remembers, he "did quite a lot locally to support my campaign for reinstatement".⁵⁸

The W.I.L. continued with its industrial strategy. In the area just south of Barnsley the group had only a small following of four or five miners. But small as this basis was, it did not prevent them from making a national impact when a strike over wage-cutting took place in the Cortonwood, Darfield Main and Wombwell Main pits in May 1942. On July 13th a meeting was held in Wombwell to persuade the strikers to return to work, at which Joe Hall, President of the Yorkshire Miners, launched into the wildest accusations against members of W.I.L., describing them as "men between fifteen and thirty who ought to be in war work or in the forces" who "are getting £10 a week to distribute subversive literature among young miners" and who were "definitely subversive and pro-Nazi".⁵⁹ The mention of such an enormous sum, which was many times the miner's normal wage, aroused immediate 'public interest', and the police came round to visit W.I.L. headquarters to remove 'subversive' files and papers,⁶⁰ followed by the national press. It fell to Ted Grant to give the lie to Hall's exaggerated claims. He showed the *Daily Express* reporter the discharge papers he got after the accident with the army lorry, and gave his true wage as £2.10s.0d. a week. As for young 'agitators' who were avoiding war work, he cited two of W.I.L.'s spare time workers who were in munitions factories, who as foreign nationals could not be made liable for military service.⁶¹

The E.C. of the Miners' Federation met on July 15th, and from this came a statement from Will Lawther, the President, trying to get the authorities to suppress *Socialist Appeal* by withholding its newsprint supplies:

"These people are able to get paper to pursue tactics which incense the majority of miners and can only have a bad effect on coal production and the war effort. This is happening at a time when trade

unions, and everybody else, are finding it difficult to get paper supplies for their legitimate use. Why?"⁶²

Hall's claims were also taken up in the House of Commons by the Conservative M.P. for Finchley, leading to the following significant exchange:

"Herbert Morrison: 'Such information as is available to me does not suggest that men are being paid £10 a week to distribute this literature, or that this literature has any appreciable influence in the mining industry or elsewhere, but I am making some further enquiries into the matter'.

Sorensen (Labour, Leyton): 'Will the Minister inquire in particular of the gentleman who made the statement and ask him to produce specific evidence on which he bases his statement?'

Morrison: 'Yes. I have given instructions that suitable inquiries should be made, and I shall be glad of any help that Mr. Hall can give me'.

*W. Gallacher (Communist, Fife): 'Would the Minister also inquire as to the good effect that the *Daily Worker* would have?'*

Morrison: 'I ask Mr. Gallacher not to be too keen to suppress this organisation; they are only pursuing much the same political policy which he and his own political friends pursued some time ago' ".⁶³

Grant repudiated Hall's allegations, demanding that the Council of the Yorkshire Miner's Federation appoint a committee to investigate W.I.L. and report to a mass meeting of their men - a suggestion not taken up, needless to say.

The Communist Party took up the cry to get *Socialist Appeal* out of the way. "Yes", agreed William Wainwright, "It is about time that the Trade Union, Labour and Co-operative organisations woke up to the danger from the Trotskyist friends of Fascism in their midst"⁶⁴, and yet again they 'planted' a story on the *Sunday Dispatch*. This described Trotskyist agitation as "Goebbels' latest attempt to slow down the manufacture of British munitions for Russia and prevent the materialisation of the Second Front".⁶⁵ As Ted Grant observed about the article, "the whole style, the whole method of presentation, the falsifications and distortions, the amalgam dishonestly linking the policies of the I.L.P. with that of the Trotskyists, all these savour of the familiar methods of Stalinism".⁶⁶

But an opportunity to challenge the witch-hunt came with the Mineworkers' Annual Conference, which was meeting in Blackpool, as Lawther realised when he warned: "if any of these people appear at Blackpool they will have to take what comes to them".⁶⁷ But appear they did, heckling his speech to conference on 21st July:

Lawther: 'This sort of tactic has got to be stopped'.

Delegate: 'Why? You have the same right to be criticised as anyone else!

Lawther: 'We have the right to be criticised by those we serve, but not by tools outside. It is playing Hitlers' game'.⁶⁸

Yet again Sir Jocelyn Lucas, M.P. for Portsmouth South, tried to raise in Parliament on July 23rd the matter of suppressing *Socialist Appeal*. The Minister for Supply, Sir Andrew Duncan, neatly side-stepped what was rapidly becoming an embarrassing issue by pointing out that the continued appearance of the paper was a matter for the Home Secretary, not his Department.⁶⁹ That did not prevent the Communists from 'inciting the Yorkshire Miners Council to use legal action to close down the paper'.⁷⁰ But far from stopping the W.I.L.'s propaganda, the campaign took it to a wider audience. The *Daily Telegraph* printed a huge photograph of the front page of *Socialist Appeal* to accompany an article containing several quotations to illustrate its political line.⁷¹ Even the *Daily Express*, interested in playing up the conspiratorial side of everything, was obliged to mention that the paper stood for "workers' control of factories and the establishment of special military academies for the training of workers officers".⁷² In this way the programme of Marxist opposition to the War was disseminated beyond the few thousand readers of their literature to millions. But the Communist Party became so jumpy at the impact of Cortonwood on its own membership that it sent out a *Statement on National Unity* to all its branches asking them to inform the District Secretaries "of any opposition or Leftism that may come up in the course of these discussions".⁷³

So it was as much for the benefit of the Communist Party's own members that it was decided to issue a pamphlet by William H. Wainwright entitled *Clear out Hitler's Agents*. In this pamphlet it emerged that the Trotskyists were the "allies and agents" of the fifth column in the ranks of the working class, whose task was "organising a delaying action" for Hitler in Britain. So this "very active" group had gone "among the factories, shipyards and coalfields, in the Labour, Trade Union and Co-operative Organisations" to "retard production" - for "who else wants to hold up British production, besides Hitler and his pro-Nazi friends?" The message of the book was spelled out on the inside back cover in thick black type:

"FIRST. Remember that the Trotskyists are no longer part of the working class movement.

SECOND. Expose every Trotskyist you come into contact with. Show other people where his ideas are leading. Treat him as you would treat an open Nazi.

THIRD. Fight against every Trotskyist who has got himself into a position of authority, either in the trade union branch, local Labour Party or Co-op. Expose him and see that he is turned out.".⁷⁴

Wainwright's pamphlet set the tone for newspaper articles, leaflets,

education classes, study groups and the like. A plug that appeared for it in *World News and Views* likened it to an A.R.P. textbook on poison gas,⁷⁵ and the third in a series of "articles for use in classes" recommended it as essential reading and repeated its conclusions: "Expose them to the workers as Nazi agents; no toleration of them in working-class organisations, still less as representatives; no debates or other forms of association or treatment as fellow workers".⁷⁶

The W.I.L.'s reply to Wainwright was put out under the title *Factory Workers: Be on your Guard: Clear Out the Bosses' Agents*. It exposed the Communist Party's aim of "doing the bosses' dirty work" by undermining the rank and file movement in the trade unions to prepare the ground for employers to victimise and sack militants. The Communists were thus "bosses' men who must be exposed and cleared out". A happy final touch was to offer £10 to anyone who could prove that the doctored quotations in Wainwright's book were not forgeries, or to show any page of it that did not contain a minimum of five lies.⁷⁷ To our knowledge, the reward has not been claimed.

The W.I.L. members took stock of these encounters in their first conference held on 22nd-23rd August, 1942. They noted the general discontent in industry, but explained the lack of generalised strike action by the stranglehold exercised over the shop stewards and union committees by the C.P. But this, in itself, constituted "a tremendous opportunity to the Fourth International, and one which must be utilised to the fullest possible extent. Once again it must be emphasised - back to the factories: the unions; the factory committees! It is impossible for the Stalinists to dam up the tide of industrial militancy for the British workers, for any length of time".⁷⁸ More concretely, the way for the group to work was to enter the party-sponsored 'Joint Production Committees' to raise the question of workers' control, and to replace bureaucrats and Stalinists by fresh working class militants.⁷⁹

The battle in the factories and unions continued unabated. In Mitcham, where Fred Emmett of the W.I.L. was President of the A.E.U. No.2 branch, a resolution went through calling for the scrapping of the national agreement on production committees and calling for the resignation of the Executive Council for exceeding its powers and making the union "the tool of the employers and the reactionary National Government".⁸⁰ The Communists now mobilised the A.E.U. No.1 branch to pass a resolution accusing the officers of No.2 branch of being Fascists. Mitcham Communist Party embodied it in a leaflet asking No.2 branch if they are aware that "decisions are being made in your own name, in your branch, which, if carried out, will undermine the whole war effort and open the front to a full-blooded attack on the workers by the Fifth Column known to exist in our country?..... These decisions are reached as a result of a small minority of fascist minded individuals who use the branch meetings for their foul ends..... We are pleased to say that our brothers of Mitcham A.E.U. No.1

did not fall for this policy and branded it correctly as Fascist". The logic was not entirely clear (why should a 'Fifth Column' require the front to be opened in order to be able to attack the workers?), but it stung No.2 branch to a fury, and when a public meeting was called locally to repeat the message, the convenor and his shop stewards turned up in an ugly mood. The Communists took fright and cancelled the meeting, but were unable to prevent the engineers from occupying the hall and carrying a resolution by 11 votes to 1 demanding a public apology from Mitcham Communist Party.⁸¹

The Trotskyists were not very firmly implanted on Tyneside by the time the great 'Total Time' strike broke out in October, 1942, though they had two members of the strike committee⁸² who were able to observe at first hand, draw the appropriate lessons, and convey accurate information to the paper. But the behaviour of the Communist Party during the strike was so discreditable⁸³ that it did lead some militants to start looking in the direction of Trotskyism. As Daisy Rawlings remembers:

"I was involved in the first strike in the shipyards, the '42 strike - I was involved in that one. The rôle of the Communist Party was very, very bad - anti-strike. By this time I was out of the Communist Party, of course.

It was over 'Total Time'. They changed the method of payment. Instead of being paid up to a Friday, they were going to pay them up to Wednesday, weren't they?..... They had a week lying-on - which the shipyard workers had never been used to, you see, they never had this week lying on - and it meant they had a week when they had no pay. The first week they had no pay because they had to leave it lying-on. Well, none of them were well enough off to do this, and they struck over this. There was no consultation.

All the shipyards (and) all the unions in the shipyards..... struck over this. (The Communist Party) were bitterly anti-strike, any sort of strike. They were strike breakers, you know, they were really bad. The men were confused - non-political people were quite confused by this. The Communist Party in Wallsend was working class, they weren't the petty bourgeois types you found in London".⁸⁴

Although the W.I.L. by now was reaching out to contacts all over the country, the impact of its interventions was localised. However much publicity W.I.L. got at national level, through questions raised in Parliament and witch-hunts in the press, it was really only possible to recruit where they had members. As most of their contacts were made in industry, they felt keenly the lack of a country-wide apparatus such as was enjoyed by the Communist Party in its almost total domination of the Engineering Union and the Shop Stewards' Movement at all levels. From the December of 1942 onwards the W.I.L. worked feverishly to try to build an organisation of militant trade unionists, who represented real union branches locally, but who could link up in a nationwide apparatus. The first attempt followed an appeal of the London Division of the I.L.P. For some time now the

Communist Party had been using the word 'Trotskyist' to attack anyone of whatever persuasion in the labour movement who recommended militant action. The I.L.P., among others, had been targets for this 'anti-Trotskyism' campaign, and the W.I.L. approached them and the Anarchists to set up a committee for mutual defence and co-operation in the industrial field. In December, 1942, they formed the 'Committee to Co-ordinate Militant Trade Union Activity' in London. Although this organisation had very little support, the Communist Party sensed the potential danger from the start. On February 28th, 1943 another long pamphlet came out, this time by John Mahon. It was a far more subtly put together argument than Wainwright's, making an attempt to discredit W.I.L.'s platform as printed in *Socialist Appeal*, and even trying to range over the history of Trotsky himself, who was apparently "never a colleague of Lenin" and "became an agent of Hitler". Here he showed a crass ignorance of Communist history, making Trotsky instead of Kamenev announce to the bourgeoisie the imminent Bolshevik rising and dating Stalin's term as General Secretary three years later than he should have done. But these were incidentals, for what really worried him was that "the conference decisions of the Trotskyites make it clear that they have decided to regard the trade unions as their main source of work, and to put on a mask of devotion to trade unionism". For their real aims were that:

"The Trotskyists pose as trade union militants for the simple reason that what they want is strikes to disrupt the war effort, and they think it easier to get strikes on economic questions than by coming out openly with their pro-Hitler policy".

"We would not allow open Fascists, blackshirts, to make their way into positions of responsibility in our trade unions to occupy shop stewards' positions in the factories", Mahon pointed out, "then why should we allow the concealed fascists, the Trotskyists, to do so?". "Sooner or later we shall have to deal with them", he concluded: "why not now?"⁸⁵ Jock Haston had little trouble in marshalling a case against this, which appeared in *Socialist Appeal* under a photograph of the banner headline of the *Daily Worker* of September 30th, 1939 supporting Hitler's peace initiative.⁸⁶ Even *Tribune* objected to Mahon's attempt to draw parallels with Nazi broadcasts and W.I.L. propaganda as a "foolish, dishonest, and senseless" polemic and a threat to democracy itself.⁸⁷ These were, however, unimportant: the Economic League realised what was really at stake when they observed that "..... the Shop Stewards' Movement has split. A new one, more to the left and under defeatist direction has been formed, and many of the Communist shop stewards have already lost their positions as secretaries and convenors..... a new Shop Stewards' Movement is being formed under the direction of the I.L.P. and the Trotskyists".⁸⁸

About this time Gerry Healy, who had pressed for the formation of a national unofficial shop stewards movement on the W.I.L. executive, was replaced as industrial organiser of the group by Roy Tearse. Highly skilled

and exceptionally capable, he had a real feel for the trade union movement and a flair for estimating the reactions of its members to a given situation. He had been in the W.I.L. in London since 1941, before coming up to Glasgow as Scottish district and Industrial organiser:

“My background, first of all, was a working class background. One side of the family were coal miners, and the other side were all shipyard workers, and so from the time when I was a boy this sort of thing became a part of you. Anyway, I joined the navy when I was fifteen as an apprentice engineer. I was subsequently discharged through contracting polio, and it was after this that my interests began in any active form..... Well, I had some contact with I.L.P. 'ers at that stage, who were essentially pacifist. There was an active pacifist group in Newcastle, and they were quite different from most of the pacifist movement. They were much more politically orientated, and I began to go along to this pacifist group, and I really considered myself a pacifist..... During that time I read the first piece of left-wing literature. I had never really read seriously. It was Lenin's *State and Revolution*, and this told me something at least, that one had to get down to the problem of politics more seriously..... Together with one or two of the older people we reconstituted the Newcastle branch of the I.L.P. that had been dead for several years, and hadn't been dismantled. There were people like Jack Rawlings, Dan Smith (you have probably heard of Dan Smith!) - much more of a Tory in recent years - Alec Auld, myself and some others..... We knocked together a platform. We started holding meetings in Bigg Market in Newcastle selling the *New Leader*, and so on. In fact, apart from the Communist Party in Newcastle, we were the only really active group at that time. Anyway, this is telescoping a tremendous amount in a short period of time, but this was of course 1939.

But in early 1940 I came across an article by Trotsky. I don't remember which journal it was (in), but I remember that it made such an impression on me that I discussed it with one or two others, that I decided - and the others agreed - that we must try and contact the Trotskyist movement. We didn't know where it existed. The first Trotskyist contact that we had was really a farce. I don't know whether we had written to someone, but this young chap came to Newcastle with a sealed letter. He was actually sent by the R.S.L. and the letter actually said that we should take no notice of this bloke, that he was a bit of a bloody fool anyway - and this was to introduce the organisation to us! This in itself put us completely off, and we had in the meantime heard about Workers International League, and it was decided we should make contact.

There were two of us - I don't remember the name of the other chap, he very rapidly fell out of the movement. We came to London

to try and get contact with Workers International League. We met Jock Haston, and Millie Lee, who is Jock's wife, and other comrades, and had a series of discussions. While we were down here we stayed with Alf Loughton - I don't know if you've heard of Alf, he's an old comrade.

He was in the Communist Party League of Youth in the early twenties, and was associated with the beginnings of the Trotskyist movement in this country - a building worker, a really fine militant, one of the best militants I've ever come across. We stayed with him, and so we met some of the Battersea people as well, like Harry Wicks (and) the other chap, who was fairly well known at that time, Hugo Dewar. But they were really vegetating in their own little group, and the people who really impressed us, as I say, were the Workers International League.

These were the impressions we took back to Newcastle with us. We maintained some sort of contact, but I decided that the organisation was small at that stage. It was a question of getting closer to it, so I decided at that stage to move to London to get close to the Trotskyist movement, and I came down in 1941 and went to work in De Havillands".⁸⁹

In May 1943 Tearse was involved in the industrial and political ferment going on around the Clyde. A strike had broken out in defence of some victimised workers, as a result of which another ninety had been given the option of a £10 fine or 30 days in prison apiece.⁹⁰ A defence committee coming together had decided on 9th May, 1943 to adopt the name of the 'Clyde Workers Committee'. The original committee of that name had formed a part of the glorious history of the Scottish Workers' Movement, when it led the famous 'revolt on the Clyde' during the First World War. It was now revived as an organisation on a shop-floor basis, with plans to develop discussion centres and issue publications and a short programme demanding the annulment of all anti-working class legislation and workers' control of transfers and indeed, of industry itself.⁹¹ The Committee went on to call a two-day conference in Glasgow on 5th and 6th June of Clyde workers and like minded delegates from Yorkshire's West Riding, Newcastle, Nottingham, Huddersfield, Barrow, and London. A formal organisational structure was agreed on, with Roy Tearse as Secretary and its central offices in Nottingham near the R.O.F. factory. The new movement took the name of the 'Militant Workers Federation', and called another national conference to meet in Nottingham on September 12th, 1943.⁹²

The M.W.F. had a rather loose structure, subdivided on an industry basis, to "make a determined effort at a close link-up between all districts in the industry", inspired, not so much as a conscious form of organisation

favoured by revolutionaries since the days of the I.W.W., but by the practical realities of the situation. As Roy Tearse recalls:

“Really, it was the broad militants who took a similar stand to the one we were taking - there were no restrictions on this - you could get the Shop Stewards Committee represented, trade union branches were represented, one or two A.E.U. District Committees were represented. Of course, this representation came from various unions..... You could get individual shop stewards who would come along representing their shops. It was really a heterogeneous collection of people. And of course, some of the support was from Glasgow..... the Clyde Workers Committee was formed..... and in a sense they were the local organisation of the Militant Workers Federation. In Barrow the District Committee of the A.E.U. really formed the local organisation of the Militant Workers Federation.

It was a loose organisation (there was no such thing as formal membership), it really was, and in some senses it never really got off the ground, but in another sense had considerable contact throughout the country. And when I say ‘Barrow - The District Committee of the A.E.U.’, it’s simply that Barrow was a one industry town, so the Shop Stewards Committee at Vickers were virtually the same as the District Committee of the A.E.U. It was present in Rugby, Nottingham and elsewhere, but Nottingham was the centre”.⁹³

Whilst the Trotskyists and their allies tried to form a movement to fight class collaboration at factory and union level, the world was startled to learn of its latest effects on a world scale. On May 23rd, 1943, the Praesidium of the Communist International announced its decision to dissolve the Comintern, and it was duly wound up a month later. Long foreseen by Trotsky, it was Stalin’s costliest sacrifice to his wartime allies, and provided W.I.L. with an ideal opportunity to explain why and to point out that the alternative - the Fourth International - was already in existence. The special issue of *Socialist Appeal* put out, included items by Lenin, Trotsky (and Stalin), discussion pieces by Grant and Haston, and a W.I.L. manifesto addressed to working class internationalists.⁹⁴ The parallel issue of *Workers International News* ran an excellent analysis by Grant of the whole course of the Comintern’s development, which still repays study.⁹⁵

The audience to which this material could appeal was, of course, limited, but at the same time an occasion arose to put over the same point to a wider public. That same summer saw the appearance of the Warner Brothers’ film version of Joseph E Davies’ book, *Mission to Moscow*, a rather rosy picture of the Soviet Union written by a former U.S.A. Ambassador there, which Gollancz had issued in London in a special version for ‘Left Book Club’ subscribers, and another for the wider market. The film was an unabashed piece of pro-Soviet propaganda, with all the objectionable features of the book and some more added on its own account. It was “propaganda in the

crudest sense of the word", complained *Tribune*, "at least as far as the more intelligent and informed sections of the British and American public are concerned". "Why on earth", it asked, "were the unhappy Moscow Trials dug out and presented in so singularly naive a fashion?"⁹⁶ Drawing attention to the protests from liberal opinion in the United States itself, Ben Elsbury of W.I.L. appealed to *Tribune* readers to make protests to the studios: "there are certain crimes which even Hollywood must not be allowed to get away with".⁹⁷ The I.L.P. threw open the pages of the *New Leader* to Reg Groves, who punched great holes in the scenario.⁹⁸ The Communists naturally plugged the film. Wainwright, quoting a Commander Seeley to the effect that "not many, except Fifth Columnists and Fascists within our midst, will object to that picture", dismissed the objections of Trotsky's wife as "a gramophone playing over and over again the croakings of Leon".⁹⁹

As it turned out, after an initial impact the film became something of a flop, and was so boring that only die-hard Stalinists and incorrigible worshippers of the Soviet Union had much time for it. But as W.I.L. admitted, "we cannot close our eyes to the fact that the biggest section of the politically conscious section of the working class will see this false film",¹⁰⁰ and some sort of counterblast had to be prepared. Warners had allegedly spent more in promoting it than any previous film, and several weeks before it was released the press was filled with rave reviews. As far as they were concerned, of course, it was just another war propaganda film.

Taking his cue from the American S.W.P., Haston was already preparing material on the film before its release, which was printed in the paper in mid-May and re-issued as the first leaflet *Mission to Moscow: A Frame-Up*. He extracted several telling quotations from the book, such as Davies' description of himself as a "capitalist" and "proud of the designation", as well as the obvious link between this outlook and his approval of the Soviet bureaucracy ("the idea of a classless society has been and is being destroyed in practice"). Haston noted in passing that a scene of Trotsky visiting Ribbentrop in Norway had already had to be cut when its obviously unhistorical character had been pointed out to the distributors.¹⁰¹

This and a second leaflet¹⁰² concentrating exclusively upon the falsifications of the Moscow Trials were run off in thousands and given to W.I.L. supporters to sell along the queues, waiting to see the film, to counter the noxious propaganda in it. On the back were photographs of Lenin's Central Committee, subtitled with the fate of each.

The film was at last released at the Regal Cinema at Marble Arch on July, 23rd, 1943. Already before the weekend was out 7,000 copies of the first leaflet had been sold, alongside the Communists selling the original book, which led to disorderly scenes. "Several of our comrades were assaulted by hysterical Stalinist men and women (a miserable bunch of middle class patriots) with the object of creating a scene and attracting the notice of the police. Out of the huge crowds which collected as a result of these attacks, hundreds of people bought the folder exposing the film. Each

day a few of our comrades have been arrested by the police and lugged off to the police station on a charge of 'obstruction'.¹⁰³ Among the arrested were Pat MacVeigh and Sam Bornstein, about to start off on a hitch-hiking holiday.

Their route up to Scotland took them within miles of Barrow, where the most enormous dispute was at that very moment about to break out. On August 1st, Ted Rea, a delegate from Barrow, reported to the National Committee of the Militant Workers Federation in Nottingham that the dispute was about to come to a head, and the committee promised all possible support. Three weeks later the Barrow District Committee of the A.E.U. gave 21 days notice of strike, but after nine days the Executive Council of the A.E.U. - crammed with Stalinists - withdrew the note and told the Barrow District Council to hold a mass meeting informing them of it.

The District Committee refused, and allowed the shop stewards to call a mass meeting on September 16th which voted to come out there and then. Soon the whole town was out.¹⁰⁴

Sensing trouble, the Communist Party sent its Lancashire Industrial organiser, Pat Devine, who began to hold meetings outside the entrances of Vickers' Yards speaking against the strike agitation and calling for full production to help the allies to mount a second front and aid Russia. After him, from Liverpool, came Jimmy Deane and Arthur Farrager to counter on behalf of W.I.L. He tried desperately to restrict the influence of their paper sales by putting out a sheet headed *A Real Socialist Appeal*, but his agitation became so hysterical that he only made himself ridiculous. Asking Deane and Farrager what he thought was a telling question as to why they weren't in the army they countered with the same, only to receive the reply "I'm doing my utmost - I'm a blood donor" to cheers of delighted laughter from the crowd.¹⁰⁵ They sold *Socialist Appeal* in hundreds during the dispute, and reaped a rich harvest of donations.

The line of the Communist Party was, of course, that the Trotskyists were a "pro-fascist gangster outfit" who abhorred "the disciplined activity of the unions" and sought to "inflame and prolong every strike, not hesitating to split the union to gain their own ends. Not the Communists alone, but the whole British people is threatened by their defeatist activity".¹⁰⁶ Mr Shvernik, leader of the Soviet Trade Union delegation then in Britain, even issued a "timely warning against enemy agents".¹⁰⁷ But W.I.L. was easily able to counter this effectively by showing how the employers had been the real ones to play ball with Hitler, when Vickers negotiated with him the sale of war materials over the bodies of the German workers in 1934 using a supporter of Mosley as go-between.¹⁰⁸

Three I.L.P. supporters of the Militant Workers' Federation sat on the strike Committee, and it invited Roy Tearse to attend:

"I was made an honorary member of the committee - that was the first

thing - and I used to attend their deliberations. It was they who would make the decisions. It was not me that did anything like that. They didn't need me to even say anything, their position was one of complete confidence. I'll give you some examples of this. The Managing Director was Sir Charles Vickers (Craven) - I think that was his name - and after a while he must have realised they were in trouble, and he sent for the Shop Stewards Committee to come to meet him. Well, the Shop Stewards Committee replied that they were not prepared to meet him, but could he come and see them. So he came to the strike committee rooms in his chauffeur-driven car, and he comes up and walks in. And they said, 'Hold up, we'll call you when we're ready. There is a meeting in progress. You can wait outside, and we'll call you when we want you'. They stretched this out - they really had him dancing, and they knew they had him dancing - this was how strongly they felt about it. And then he came in and said his piece and made his proposals, and sat down waiting for their answer. And they said 'We'll let you know. We'll have to discuss this, and give you our answer - maybe tomorrow'. He wanted to know on the spot what the position was! What this story shows - it really tells of the tremendous confidence that these workers had in themselves.

There did come one stage - at one point, actually - Trewartha, who was the chairman of the strike committee, a very capable and honest worker - said that they had to make a decision one way or another, whether to hang on or go back. And he did ask my advice about this, and someone suggested 'put it to the workers'. And Trewartha, quite correctly, said that would have to be done, but they, as a responsible leadership, had to make the recommendations. It was this sort of leadership that was responsible for the victory of the strike. There is no question about this. It was a resounding victory".¹⁰⁹

Ted Rea from the Militant Workers' Federation was in charge of collecting money for hardship payments and, of course, this led to allegations that the strike was funded by Trotskyists. How long these rumours were to float around can be judged by the assertion during the Newcastle Trial seven months later that "Tearse boasted that the Militant Workers Federation had given five hundred pounds to the Barrow strike".¹¹⁰

Such a dangerous strike in the shipbuilding industry in wartime was, of course, a direct challenge to the Government. "We cannot tolerate it", said Ernest Bevin to the House of Commons on September 24th, "and I think I'm right in issuing a warning to those people who vary in their support of the war effort. It is not limited to one side only. I have a number of 'ites, including Trotskyites, and in their circulars and literature they write against the War". He warned the strikers of the government action, and pointed out that the strike was illegal.¹¹¹ He stated officially that "the workers who are on strike are deliberately flouting their own agreement and the arbitration

procedure to which, through their unions, they are parties. They are impeding the war effort and endangering the lives of British fighting men. The only honorable and proper course for the Barrow workpeople is to accept the decision of the tribunal and end the matter".¹¹²

By now reports were flooding the papers that the Ministry of Labour experts were busy devising legislation to punish Trotskyists and other anti-war agitators by penalties for anyone starting a strike or helping it to continue who had not worked in the appropriate mine or factory for a specified length of time,¹¹³ or that the government was on the point of using the Defence Regulations or 18b against them to the same purpose.¹¹⁴ A more immediate threat came from the Minister of Supply. Sir Andrew Duncan had a paper controller under his authority whose task it was to allocate supplies of newsprint on the basis of pre-war circulation of journals and newspapers. More than once *Socialist Appeal* had been reduced to using cut-offs from the Fleet Street papers, paper used in the fishmarket and even, on one occasion, greaseproof paper. Haston had managed to give wildly exaggerated statistics of pre-war circulation to the paper controller and had secured a more than generous allocation (so ample, indeed, that they had been partly able to finance their paper by selling the surplus on the Black Market).¹¹⁵ But now, when the Battle of the Atlantic was going well for the Allies, increased supplies of newsprint from Canada led to an increase of quota to other newspapers. But in the W.I.L.'s case the controller suspended their licence on a technical plea, and threatened to revoke it altogether. In the end, perhaps as a result of an appeal to its readers, the size of *Socialist Appeal* was unaffected.¹¹⁶ Fleet street, on the other hand, was free to mount a witch-hunt. The *Daily Mail* reporter hung around the door of William Morris Hall to glean information from the W.I.L.'s second annual conference, from where he retailed the wildest rumours that the Barrow strike committee was inside, being entertained by the Trotskyists. Snooping around Northdown Street, a reporter discovered that the Trotskyists were living and working "in poverty, a physical condition which is reflected in their mental outlook", whilst having the "fox-like cunning" to conceal themselves in a builder's yard in Kings Cross.¹¹⁷ The Communists joined in the general clamour. When a shop stewards' committee under their influence at Watts & Co. in Camberwell asserted that W.I.L. members were "Fascists", Jim Hinchcliffe wrote a letter to the *South London Press* summarising the main facts of the alliance of Hitler and Stalin before June 1941 and challenging the C.P. to a debate.¹¹⁸ H. Kanner's reply on behalf of the shop stewards committee was to take up the rumour of the national press: "the great Labour Movement would do well thoroughly to isolate them and work to operate 18b to put them where they rightfully belong - inside, next to Mosley and Hess".¹¹⁹

None of the press barrage, or the immense pressure of the Communist Party from inside the union, had the slightest effect upon the Barrow Strikers:

"The Stalinists had hardly any effect in Barrow. There's no question about this. I've rarely seen a strike so solid. In fact, it was so solid they didn't have pickets. They didn't need pickets. There were two blacklegs - there were only two blacklegs during the strike - and the police had raised with the strike committee the question of protecting the rights of people who wanted to work, and so on, and so the strike committee agreed to provide an escort for these people who wanted to work. They picked the two smallest fellows they could find to make it look ludicrous, and they had to walk through the streets with the women shouting from the windows at them. It was so humiliating for them they only ever went to work for about two days. The strike was absolutely solid. I've never seen anything like it".¹²⁰

The strike was a resounding victory for the Barrow men, in spite of all.¹²¹ Their ability to win through in the face of such odds lay in the age-old capacity of the working class to utilise the official machinery of its institutions and to elaborate alongside it unofficial bodies that were more responsive to its needs, and to combine the two with a high degree of cohesion and class consciousness. As W.I.L. Conference documents analysed it:

"The Barrow strike was remarkable for the magnificent co-ordination of legal and 'illegal' activity; co-ordination between the local, legal machinery of the unions, as evidenced in the A.E.U. branches and District Committee, and the 'illegal' machinery: the Council of Action, the Shop Stewards' Committee and the Strike Committee. Backed by the high morale of the Barrow workers, it was the co-ordination of the legal and 'illegal' activity which gave the 'victory punch' to the Barrow workers' struggle".¹²²

Further up the union the 'legal' machinery had not been quite so supportive. So strong was the C.P. influence that the union's Executive Council had sacked the Barrow District Committee's paid Secretary (64 years old!), suspended the District Committee itself, and refused to reinstate it after the strike had ended. But it became speedily clear that the Executive had seriously mishandled the whole affair and piled up great hatred for itself. Even the *Daily Express* commented that "the curious feature of this strike is that most of the men out at Barrow feel more anger towards the leadership of their union for their handling of grievances during the past six months than they do towards their employers".¹²³ The Union bureaucracy had totally misjudged the situation and lost immense prestige, and when the Barrow shop stewards circulated the news to other areas they felt obliged to call a special conference which met in London's Holborn Hall on the 4th and 5th November. Only two delegates had been allowed from the Barrow shop stewards, elected from a meeting specially convened by Crane, whilst the suspended district committee demonstrated with placards outside the Hall,

and leafletted the other delegates as they went in, appealing to them to fight to make the Executive the servants of the membership instead of those of the Communist Party.¹²⁴ The platform took a severe hammering from the floor over its handling of the dispute. An attempt by one of the C.P. to fasten the blame on *Socialist Appeal* only encouraged a third of the 500 delegates to buy their own copies at the door of the hall.¹²⁵ But the Conference had no power to take formal decisions, and eight months later three of the District Committee were still petitioning the Union's appeals court for reinstatement, including one who had even been prevented from standing as a delegate to Labour Party Conference.¹²⁶

Whilst the Barrow dispute was not yet over the second national conference of the W.I.L. in London on the 2nd - 4th October brought together 34 delegates and 100 observers to take stock of the total situation. They analysed the economic contradictions of the arms market by agreeing that despite the fact that the War was going well for the allies, the influx of United States produced weapons had led to a contraction in the arms industry here, with threats of wage-cutting and redundancy. They noted that the strikes that were just beginning were as yet scattered and isolated, due to the immense weight of the Labour bureaucracy and the Communist Party, and had mostly taken place in previously under-organised areas and sectors. They learned how the National Council of Shop Stewards led by the C.P. had virtually collapsed due to its strike-breaking rôle, and that the organisation the labour movement needed on a national level was the Militant Workers' Federation. They agreed that the task in industry now was to go over to the offensive, "raise consciously in the minds of the industrial workers the necessity to end the industrial truce",¹²⁷ and to get them to think of the Shop Stewards' Committees "not as defensive organisations of this or that group of workers, but as organs of control, as organs of power".¹²⁸ They rejected the I.L.P. policy of limiting the Militant Workers' Federation to single industries as against a real national structure, since "we will only succeed in this task of building the mass party and challenging the capitalist class for power to the extent that we succeed in converting the mass industrial organs of the working class into instruments of the socialist revolution".¹²⁹ The extraordinary atmosphere of optimism in their recent successes is well illustrated by a speech delivered by Ted Grant:

"Wonderful day. Wonderful possibilities open up in front of us. You can feel revolution in the air. That attitude must permeate our conference. The correctness of our viewpoint should give us confidence in preparing ourselves for our rôle in the coming revolution. Whatever its fate may be, it is certain that we can, we must, we will play our part, and stamp our tendency as an influence, as a serious factor in the situation, as an organisation that will play its part in the revolution. When, twelve months ago, we called our thesis

'Preparing for Power', this was not a mad gesture. That is the serious problem with which we are faced".¹³⁰

Grant's optimism was premature. The authorities and the Stalinists were ready for the next encounter on Clydeside. In November, 1943, Galbraith, the Deputy Chief Industrial Commissioner for Scotland and the Ministry of Labour's Chief conciliation officer wrote to Bevin that the Militant Workers' Federation "seems to be acquiring increasing influence, and because of this to be able more readily to undermine official trade union authority".¹³¹ As soon as talk went round of reviving the Clyde Workers' Committee¹³², Jack Owen of the *Daily Worker* editorial board had come up to Scotland to use all his powers as a propagandist to counteract it.¹³³ He speedily got out a pamphlet using the clever technique of seeming to sympathise with the grievances, but pressing for accelerated production so that "no Scottish member of the working class" could deprive Scots soldiers in North Africa of "weapons to protect their lives or to win victory". When discontent focused upon transfers - some of them to south of the border - Owen accused the Trotskyists of using nationalism "to thwart the successful workings of necessary transfers", and advised that "transfers should never, where the circumstances are clear, be allowed to become a political issue - this offers opportunities to the Trotskyists", who were using "Fascist argument" and "Fascist methods" to halt them.¹³⁴

At the same meeting of the Militant Workers' Federation, at which Rea announced the imminence of the Barrow strike¹³⁵, a shop steward called Jones from the Clyde Workers' Committee reported on the feeling at the Rolls Royce Factory at Hillington near Glasgow, where a new agreement had promised women inspectors a rise from £3.2s.0d to £4.3s.0d, but the management had offset this by issuing cards putting them on the lowest grade.¹³⁶ Many of the shop stewards were Stalinists, only two or three were members of the Militant Workers' Federation and the Clyde Workers' Committee, and many of the women in the factory were fresh to trade unionism. The Clyde Workers' Committee shop stewards encouraged the women to meet, and obtained majorities for strike action¹³⁷ calling for the upgrading of categories 4a and b to grade 3, as well as a minimum wage for all of 37/- plus 20/- plus 13/6d. national bonus.¹³⁸ Three factories then struck work, and the Clyde Workers' Committee put out leaflets calling for the support of the rest of Clydeside for the women, and warning of the rôle of the Communist Party.¹³⁹ Again, the National Organiser of the A.E.U., Wal Hannington, arrived to urge a return to work. The hold of the Stalinists on the Shop Stewards' Committee was too strong, and the 26 shop stewards opposed to their refusal to elect a strike committee failed to make their opposition known to the rest of the strikers. When the Shop Stewards convened a mass meeting in the White City Stadium, the Convenor and the Shop Stewards' Committee, backed by the Union Executive Council and its full-time officials, called for a return to work. They even refused to give any

information to a deputation sent from factories in the same group in the Midlands! They were unsuccessful at first, but despite frequent unofficial meetings on Glasgow Green held by supporters of the Clyde Workers' Committee to demand a proper strike committee,¹⁴⁰ the Communist Party's hold on the shop stewards was too great. A secret ballot was arranged, and a majority obtained for a return to work.

The tactics of the Communist Party had become more sophisticated since the Barrow débâcle, though it is still difficult to believe that they would have succeeded if the Clyde Workers' Committee had been better implanted. For a start, the Communist Party's engineering journal refrained from any direct attack upon the strikers whilst the strike was on, avoiding the isolation of their men that had happened at Barrow. This did not prevent Stalinist organisers like Harry McShane from blaming it on "Trotskyist strike fomentors", "working behind the scenes" in *The Daily Worker*, whilst the strike was on,¹⁴¹ or *The New Propeller* from claiming they were playing a "Fifth Column disruptive role, in true Hitler style", once it was over.¹⁴² The message was carefully rubbed in by a pamphlet put out by John Gollan in the atmosphere of disillusion that followed:

"Don't fall for employer's provocation nor for the provocative tactics of that small group of Trotskyists and the I.L.P.ers masquerading as the 'Clyde Workers' Committee', who are trying to 'provoke' trouble for political reasons. *Those reactionary political forces in the ranks of the working class, among whom there is not a single reliable representative of the working class, do their utmost to sabotage the people's anti-fascist war, hate Stalin and the Soviet Union, are undermining and seeking to disrupt the Trade Union Movement, and side with the reactionary employers in attacking the Joint Production Committees*".¹⁴³

The Communist Party had good reason to be pleased with this particular piece of strike breaking, and they used it to try to get the Minister of Labour to withdraw his insulting reference to them as 'fleas':

"But why does Mr Bevin continue to bracket Trotskyists and Communists together in relation to strikes?

He knows that the Trotskyists, through their press, interfere in and inflame every strike.

He knows that the Communists whom he accuses of having 'ulterior motives' have striven might and main to avoid stoppages. Their only 'ulterior motive' has been to win the War".¹⁴⁴

Although this signal defeat broke the wages movement of the working women in Glasgow for the duration of the War,¹⁴⁵ the Clyde Workers' Committee and the Trotskyists did not come out of it with any discredit, and their influence steadily grew. As Tearse remembers:

"I was based in Glasgow as the Scottish Organiser, and I was also National Industrial Organiser. What was interesting was that up to the point of the Apprentices' Strike there had been real, solid, hard graft on the part of the Workers International League. There's no question about it. The industrial base that was established was established by the time the R.C.P. was formed..... In many ways the real activists, and the fruits of their activity, came to bear between 1944 and 1945. On Clydeside, I think it is fair to say we were highly respected in the working class movement. An example, for instance: when we held meetings outside John Browns' and Dalmuirs', the platform was supplied by workers. We had people from inside the factories to sell the papers. We had meetings at the factory gates every day of the week. We had a very active period altogether.

When we came out of prison the St Andrews Hall was full. It was a huge concert hall, and on the platform with us were a fair number of factory convenors and, I think, a majority of the A.E.U. District Committee. The situation was that I couldn't go out with my wife sometimes without some worker passing, whom I didn't even know personally, who would stop and talk. We were getting to be known as well as this.

I remember when there was a joint anti-war meeting of a few organisations in the Cosmos Cinema, and this was chaired by - I've forgotten his name - you must know his name - he was the conductor of the Orpheus Choir - Sir Hugh Robertson! He was a pacifist actually. And in spite of the protests from the Anarchists he gave us the most time of the meeting. It was that sort of thing. And we had a considerable sale of the *Socialist Appeal*. We had one good contact, not only in Glasgow, but outside Glasgow".¹⁴⁶

Presumably it was this that J.R. Campbell had in mind when he appealed to the Scottish Workers to oppose "the Trotskyists of various shades", the "pestilential Hitlers agents" who wanted to "demoralise sections of the workers and impede production".¹⁴⁷

All in all, it was a most remarkable activity that went on through the whole of the period 1941-44, stemming from what was never more than 300 people. But it would be a mistake to assume, as some did¹⁴⁸; that the W.I.L. was an activist group, pure and simple, and neglected its functions of raising the level of political understanding of its own members. Internal life could be no less intense:

"Discussions used to take place once a week. We used to have lecturers come down from head office to give us some of their experiences and talk to us on various aspects of the history of the labour movement. A lot of it consisted of the development of capitalism during the 19th century, the late 19th century leading to the Russian Revolution, the reasons for the 1905 Revolution, which was a

failure, and then to the 1917 Revolution and the consequence of it: and of course, there was the development of the Communist Party in its early days.

A lot of lectures we used to have were on the mistakes of the Communist Party in its early days which dwelt on the period from 1921, from the interventions right up to expulsion of Trotsky. We used to get a lot of these lectures and, of course, discussion used to take place after. That was once a week, lectures".¹⁴⁹

A serious attitude was also maintained towards theory in the group's public literature. *Workers International News* as its theoretical journal came out without interruption throughout the period 1938-44 and preceded its agitational press. Several of Trotsky's pamphlets were issued, including *The ILP and the Fourth International*, *The Lesson of Spain*, and *War and the World Revolution*. The only edition of the *Transitional Programme* to appear in England at this time was that printed by W.I.L. as a special issue of *Workers International News*.¹⁵⁰ But perhaps the most amazing feat was the reproduction of the whole of Trotsky's *Permanent Revolution* cut by Millie Lee on 218 stencils, run off, and issued with a printed cover, at a time when this indispensable work had long been unobtainable in Britain.

It was also possible to raise Trotskyist ideas in a more advanced form in other areas of working class political life. Unlike the Labour Party, the I.L.P. continued to meet, and even experienced a short period of growth.¹⁵¹ The W.I.L. already had a small basis inside it on Tyneside, where they recruited the militants responsible for the local anti-war agitation in 1939.¹⁵² They were shortly joined in Tooting by Betty Russell, wife of Gerry Healy. The I.L.P. faction argued against those I.L.P.'ers who took a defeatist line on the Soviet Union, by demanding "immediate despatch of arms and material to the Soviet Union under the control of factory and trade union committees"¹⁵³ whilst calling for the "overthrow of the bureaucratic clique in the Kremlin" by "a revolution within the Soviet Union".¹⁵⁴ As opposed to the I.L.P.'s traditional pacifism they argued for "a programme for war" to "separate the anti-Fascist aims of the working class from the profiteering motives of the capitalists".¹⁵⁵ Against the I.L.P.'s utopian 'Socialism Now' Campaign they argued that "the slogan of Labour to power was the only one which would lead to the winning of support of the masses for a revolutionary socialist policy",¹⁵⁶ dismissed by F.A. Ridley as "valiant attempts of the Trotskyists to revive the fast putrefying corpse" of the Labour Party.¹⁵⁷ Finally, they argued that "an approach be made to the Fourth International" in view of "the urgent necessity for the working class to be led by a workers' International based on Marxism and embracing the Bolshevik form of organisation".¹⁵⁸

The N.A.C. had already investigated complaints about 'Trotskyism' on 22nd and 23rd March, 1943, but the final expulsion of the Tyneside group from the I.L.P. took place shortly after the formation of the Revolutionary

Communist Party, By then Brockway was preparing to take the I.L.P. back into the Labour Party, and in the course of a discussion with Laski the latter had raised the question of 'Trotskyism' in the I.L.P. To smooth over the planned re-entry (which in Brockway's case took place almost immediately, even if the rest of the Party took thirty years to follow him) the Easter 1945 Conference of the I.L.P. expelled T. Dan Smith (member of the N.A.C. and North Eastern Divisional Chairman), Dror Binah (North East Divisional Secretary), Ken Skethaway (Divisional Treasurer) and Alex Auld (*New Leader* Organiser). Along with these Herbie Bell also resigned and joined the R.C.P.¹⁵⁹ Betty Russell¹⁶⁰ and Bill Hunter were in already, for by then the I.L.P. was an empty shell.

The W.I.L. gave frequent proof of its internationalism, and assisted those in the movement who fled to England to escape the Nazi terror. One of these was Bob Wilsker, an Austrian Trotskyist:

"I was born in January 1919, so I remember first of all 1927, when the first Austrian Fascists, basically from the country, had a clash with the Social Democrats when workers marched on the the Palace of Justice and the police headquarters and set it alight, and a hundred people were killed. I remember that very well - it was June, 1927.....

The Austrian Socialist Party had its own military unit, the *Schutzbund*. It was commanded by General Korner, who was a wartime general. He was also an active socialist. There were also an enormous amount of arms hidden away in different buildings which were owned by the Social Democrats, and before February 1934 there were many searches made to find arms which belonged to the working class *Schutzbund*. This was the preparation for the showdown in February 1934 in Austria.....

The Roman Catholic Church began a build-up, particularly with Dollfuss coming in, a build-up in the unions. (I did write an article on this for the *Fourth International* on the events of February 1934). There was a general strike, and the lights went out. I was already an apprentice. The machines stopped, no one knew what had happened, and the boss said to me that it was a general strike (that) had been declared. He knew of its importance - he was a Russian Jew. Then there were rumours of firing starting, and we actually heard the guns on the hills that surround Vienna (firing) onto the Karl Marx building I still distinctly remember when I rushed up there one of the Fascists said, 'When we shoot the enemy, we shoot to kill'.....

I was still doing my apprenticeship. My generation was very much involved in the Socialist Youth Movement in Vienna of the Left. So we were always there. It was important for us. So, like many others, I was deeply involved.....

I was a Socialist Zionist, and became a Trotskyist long before 1936. Before this time I had certain contacts with the Communist

Party, and I remember well when the Communist Party came to my father, who was a book binder, and asked him to bind Lenin's *State and Revolution* in very small print. It was illegal, and my father was to collate it. I don't know why, because it was a terrible risk, of course. This was about the only contact we had with the Communist Party. Not to produce anything else after the defeats of 1934 but *State and Revolution* shows how divorced they were from the working class. In fact, I only remember it now.....

I had lived two years under Hitler, but when this came (the Crystal Night) my parents said 'It is time for you to go'. I had already served my apprenticeship. My sister put an advertisement in the journal *Machinery* 'Young Toolmaker Wanted', and I got a permit, and went straight into a job.....

I had an address from Vienna. It was Hugo Dewar and Rita.....

I was interned. We were all living in Hampstead and the police came round. We collected our clothes and went. All the men there were interned in the Isle of Man, and the first few days we did not know what was going to happen. But I was a young lad, no responsibilities, no wife, or children, or girlfriend, so I personally had a wonderful time, because we had all the European intellectuals there. The soldiers guarding us were more prisoners than we were. We were in the hotels, and I had an upstairs room overlooking the sea - two or three to a room. There was a double line of barbed wire, and the soldier would march in between this double line of barbed wire. So he was more of a prisoner than we were. After a few weeks they realised we were more anti-Fascist than they were. In the morning they had a roll-call in case someone escaped, though there was no place to escape to from the Isle of Man. We had a complete camp democracy. We elected our own house leader and our kitchen rota, and it worked very well because I was very young, and one of the few workers. The camp was made up of doctors, professors and musicians. The Amadeus Quartet was actually formed in our camp - this is a top-line musical group. We had a better University than anywhere in Europe. You could learn anything. Ubrich, the famous opera singer, gave a three hour lecture on the technical aspects of it. The standard was fantastic. Henry Cohen the artist organised exhibitions. One exhibition translated means 'Art Work where it Does not Belong', and he did a poster of a toilet with roses coming out. When he was released he won the London Transport exhibition 'Not to Travel in Peak Hours'. The standards were enormous. There was no militarisation, the food was enough; and for the rich, they had to do the washing-up and the potato peeling as well. In general, the atmosphere was very good. I found it very good.....

It was nice to be surrounded by those people. There were a series of lectures. There was Professor Halpern, an Austrian Jewish

Socialist, who gave a whole series of lectures with Max Beer as his basis. They were marvellous. I actually read *Capital* in the internment camp - the whole way through. I lectured on 'The Coming Mass production'. Little did I know that I would go into production engineering later in life. So I lectured on this, and Niebert, one of the theoreticians of the 2½ International who went to America, he gave a few lectures. There were all kinds of Socialist debates - not the kind of internal Trotskyist debates, but wider and more human.....

I learned a lot and really had a great time there. It was really marvellous, and I was lucky that I didn't smoke. So I didn't have to go to work for money, and there was time for Socialist thinking. There was the Curator of the Viennese Museum there - I don't remember his name - but we had them all.....

We had the director of the Blind Institute, Dr. Fuchs. He was an Austrian. I only mention this because I was a toolmaker, so I was called up to the office and told 'You are going to Smiths Industries tomorrow'. 'Who's Smiths?', I asked. 'You'll be away tomorrow'. But I was a toolmaker. Fuchs, a brilliant mind, who was blind, and a fine human being, had to wait another two months.....

I came back in 1941, and was working in Smith's Industries, the Cricklewood Branch. I was sent there..... There were a few Germans over there, but not functioning as a group. There was Max Laufer and Peter Jacobs. Later they came to Coventry. I shared rooms with them in 1940..... Eventually the publication *Solidarität* became the heart of the matter. We had two Germans who were sisters. One of them became my wife, and the production *Solidarität* became the key..... We went to Wormwood Scrubs Prison and saw the prisoners behind barbed wire and began talking to them in German. In time we became so well known that the prisoners would come to us when they saw us behind the barbed wire. Strangely enough, there was never any hindrance on the part of the army authorities.....

We had someone in Oxford, and he distributed there, and we made contact with others in other places. (To Sam) You remember, we had a social in Harrow Road. It was a good social, and a number of prisoners of war were there..... We used all their (i.e. the W.I.L.) facilities..... We were full members of the W.I.L. and R.C.P., so the question of separate representation did not come into it..... We also took part in the open meetings in Conway Hall. Our member's activities would depend on their knowledge of English, but they were an integral part of the organisation. It was only our paper that gave us a separate identity.....

In one case I came into an argument with a terribly intellectual Nazi. He was very shrewd in his own way. I remember we had a discussion through the barbed wire. He was very intelligent. I don't

remember now what the discussion was about, but he was the only one who defended the Nazis.....

We were well covered by Scotland Yard. We had a house where 4 or 5 comrades lived, and there was a constant watch on us, and of course, we used to watch the chap they put on to watch us. So he was watching us, and we were watching him. The interesting thing is, though, that after the War, when I applied for citizenship, the Scotland Yard man came to me, and he glanced round and there was the *Solidarität* there in his file, and said 'Have you ever written any articles?' And it was useless to deny it - the articles were there. He then wanted to know whether I had ever used a name other than Wilsker, and I said 'Yes'. I had used the name Binder..... I got my passport then after a few months".¹⁶¹

Not all of the refugees came from Hitler's dominions. In France Raymond Molinier and Pierre Frank of the Parti Communiste Internationaliste - a group that had split from the Fourth International - were arrested for propaganda against the War by the French authorities, and given eight years in jail. When France collapsed they escaped, Molinier to South America, and Frank to Britain. Together with Betty Hamilton he edited a bulletin called *International Correspondence* with a decidedly defencist bias.¹⁶² Not long afterwards he was picked up for refusing to register with the British police and sentenced to six months hard labour. When his term was over they refused to set him at liberty, and despite protests from the W.I.L. he was not released from the Isle of Man until 15th November, 1943.¹⁶³ At the end of the War a deportation order was slapped on him, but not enforced.¹⁶⁴ Naturally the W.I.L. protested at these constraints upon his freedom, and extended solidarity to him - a sentiment that was not returned when he devoted the next few years to distorting their political positions in the eyes of the world Trotskyist movement.¹⁶⁵

W.I.L. members in the forces were able to put their positions at the service of the movement there. In India Douglas Garbutt was able to carry on lengthy and quite illegal discussions with workers who supported the Bolshevik/Leninist Party of India. When the Ceylonese Trotskyists had escaped from prison and came to India to live in the underground, Fred Bunby not only established contact with them, but even served as their courier:

"..... I was often in Calcutta in the evenings. I used to call in a Stalinist bookshop whilst I was there, and developed friendly terms with the bookseller. Now he wasn't a member of the Communist Party, he was from a split-off group who were ultra-Stalinist. They called themselves the Labour Party of India, and later they changed their name to the Bolshevik Party of India. It was through him that I made contact with the L(anka) S(ama) S(amaja) P(arty) there.

After a couple of months he knew where I stood, that I was a

member of the Fourth International, so one day he asked if I would like to meet an Indian comrade who was a Fourth Internationalist. So he arranged a meeting, and this young comrade turned up. He was known under the name of Nitti, and he arranged a meeting at this place, which was out-of-bounds area for the troops, so I had to come into the area by taxi and come out by taxi. But at this meeting there were a couple of Indian comrades - one was Indra Sen - Nitti, of course, and Colvin de Silva turned up. At the time only Colvin from the L.S.S.P. was there. After that I would meet them about once a fortnight. Leslie turned up, and I had some discussions with him..... Colvin's wife was still in Colombo, and he was running short of funds, so he suggested to me that if I had any contacts in the R.A.F., or knew of anyone whom I could trust who was going to Colombo, would I contact him? Colvin wanted someone to take a letter to his wife, who would hand over money to the contact, and he would post it to me from Colombo, and I would pick it up from the post office in Calcutta. We couldn't do it on the R.A.F. postal system because it would be opened, but I would call at the Calcutta post office, sign my name, get the letter and hand the cash over to Colvin. This happened on two or three occasions".¹⁶⁶

Many such incidents could be repeated from other theatres of war. Supporters of the W.I.L. with the forces in Cairo were instrumental in making contact between the Fourth International and the much persecuted Egyptian Trotskyists.¹⁶⁷ After the R.C.P. was formed the same was repeated in the case of the Palestinian section.¹⁶⁸ The W.I.L.'s activity had already established sections in both the North and the South of Ireland. W.I.L. comrades were also able to make contact with the Trotskyist movement in Italy, which had been underground for so long. As Pat McVeigh recounts:

"We came into Italy. It was a very stimulating experience. You had a situation where the Germans had rapidly occupied the country. They didn't have any real occupying troops, and this had been done with the connivance of their allies, the people on the spot. Even people like ourselves realised this. The idea was that Italy was a breakaway, and the Germans could do the work for them. As the Germans retreated - gradually, painfully, and very slowly, immediately you would get all sorts of small radical, left wing and revolutionary groups arising, just like mushrooms in a field overnight, and you would get literally dozens of left wing groups. And people who had been given up for dead years ago, like Nicola di Bartolomeo and even Bordiga, who was a contemporary of Lenin, came out of prison camps.

It was a remarkable experience, and of course, the Italian Socialists, the Italian comrades right from the Socialist Party Right, right to the Communist Party, had gone underground, and politics had pretty well stopped there, round about 1925. And of course,

these people came into legal political activity again, and had no conception of the rise of Stalinism. They had no conception of the Moscow Trials. They just regarded themselves as Socialists and Communists. They were Socialists and they were Communists because in 1925 there was not a hell of a lot of difference between the two in the Italian Socialist Movement. And I can remember - this was very poignant - an old man, an old worker, coming to me in Naples and saying, 'I am not a Trotskyist, I am not a Stalinist, I'm a Communist. What's the difference between the two?'

So you had the gradual growth of cohesive political movements within the next year or so, and of course, the Communists were only interested in winning the War. The important thing was, as the areas were occupied by the Allies, the Communist Party organised the ceremonial parades where the Italian workers, the partisans, and the working class, who had armed themselves one way or another, handed in their arms again. The revolutionary socialist situation was the last thing the Communist Party wanted. In a small way we tried to do what we could to educate the Italian workers. But, of course, contact with them was not as close as we would have liked, partly because of the language difficulty (although this was largely overcome), but partly simply because of the war situation. We made contact - myself and two or three other comrades - we made contact first of all with such people as Bordiga, and later with Nicola di Bartolomeo, who was organising the Section of the Fourth International in Italy. But then I was away and wounded and in hospital, and out of circulation for a period. Then I came back to find di Bartolomeo was dying. He had been wounded in the Spanish Civil War, and had been in the Lampedusa Concentration Camp, and of course, although he looked a very strong man (he gave one this impression because of this tremendous feeling of integrity), but of course, he was a very sick man, and in poor condition, and (with) no proper medical facilities available, and he was dead in two or three days.

We had, as I say, very close contact with the Italian comrades in Naples and Rome..... and that was the situation. We did what we could, and of course, we were in contact not merely with the Italian comrades in the organisation as such, but the general left wing movement, the Communist movement, and of course, the partisan movement. Then I was demobilised because I was medically unfit and came back to this country".¹⁶⁹

Members of W.I.L. did not ignore the ranks of the forces themselves. Having a military policy provided the framework for a programme - civilian rights for the soldiers, civilian rates of pay, the right to trade union

organisation, and an end to arbitrary ruling class disciplinary measures. Central to the agitation was the demand for soldiers' committees:

"It must be made an essential part of a working class programme to raise alongside such demands as trade union rates of pay, etc., the demand for Soldiers' Committees to remedy grievances and win a real democracy in the armed forces".¹⁷⁰

An instrument was already to hand in the Army Bureau of Current Affairs, a government-sponsored educational course for the soldiers in which most of the left got involved from the beginning - Labour Party, Communists, I.L.P. and Trotskyists. Most active for the W.I.L. was John Williams, who as an ex-soldier knew just how far to go without breaking the law. On one occasion an officer came down to lecture on 'The Parliamentary System', only to be followed by Williams, arguing for a system of soviets instead. In the vote at the end Williams gained 70 votes and the officer not one for the parliamentary system!¹⁷¹

A year later the authorities caught up with him, and he was sent down for six months for agitating for soldiers' rights. At his court martial he condemned it as typical of officer-caste methods against soldier militants who fought for elementary democratic rights. He called for the establishment of military schools at state expense for the training of worker officers under trade union control, and closed with a brave appeal to his comrades to struggle for democratic rights, decent conditions, a decent wage, and the replacement of the officer caste by election from the ranks. He ended up at the notorious Darland Detention Camp near Gillingham in Kent, where a year before a soldier had been clubbed to death by two Military Policemen.¹⁷²

The ferment in the armed forces, which took on some extraordinary forms, such as the Cairo Forces' Parliament, was not at all to the liking of the Communist Party. On July 10th, 1943 the left managed to get an article by the American writer W.H. Chamberlin into the armed forces' magazine *World Press Review* which condemned the preposterous propaganda of *Mission to Moscow* as a retrospective attempt to "underwrite the authenticity of the Moscow treason trials", and recommended the "mountainous accumulation of evidence" of the Dewey Counter-Trial in Mexico, to the grave annoyance of D.N. Pritt. He even raised it in Parliament, getting the Minister of War, Sir James Grigg, to promise that the Middle Eastern authorities would "exercise some supervision from the point of view of policy over such publications". Pritt was not satisfied with this, but demanded a purge.¹⁷³

As a result the Cairo Forces' Parliament was closed down, and a similar fate overtook the one in Cyrenaica. Here Arthur Leadbetter had been elected Prime Minister and Home Secretary of the Benghazi Forces' Parliament, but as soon as the news of the Apprentices' Strike came through he was posted back to Cairo on instructions from the War Office Security

H.Q., and the parliament was reduced to functioning as a 'brains trust'. When he arrived in Cairo the disciplinary officer told him that in pre-war days he had been "connected with an organisation now fomenting strikes", and that "as a result security people in London were 'worried' about the possibility of my conducting 'anti-war' activity out here".¹⁷⁴

With this agitation going on at the height of the War, it is not surprising that some could become too enthusiastic with the possibilities opening up - particularly Ted Grant, who made the following speech, taken out of context ever after:

"We have a victorious army in North Africa and Italy, and I say, yes. Long Live the Eighth Army, because that is our army. One of our comrades has spoken to a number of people who have had letters from the Eighth Army soldiers showing their complete dissatisfaction. We know of incidents in the army, navy and other forces that have never been reported, and it is impossible for us to report. It is OUR Eighth Army that is being hammered and tested and being organised for the purpose of changing the face of the world. This applies equally to all the forces".¹⁷⁵

Though these remarks could have been expressed more clearly, whether they prove that the W.I.L. was a chauvinist organisation must be judged by the contents of the whole of this chapter.

Notes

1. C.f. above, p.33, and Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back*, London, 1982, pp 58-9, 81, 130 etc.
2. Op. cit., pp. 103-4; R. Croucher, *Engineers at War*, London, 1982, pp 75-83, 204-13, etc.
3. A.J.P. Taylor, *English History 1914-1945*, Oxford, 1965, p.566.
4. 'Preparing for Power', special issue of *Workers International News*, vol. v, no. 6, September, 1942, p. 20.
5. "End the Truce! Labour to Power!", in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. iii, no. 9, June 1941, c.f. W. Hunter, 'Marxists and the Second World War', in *Labour Review*, old series 1958, p.145.
6. C.f. Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back*, London, 1982, pp. 75-7, etc.
7. G.H., 'The Communist Party and the War', in *Workers International News*, vol. iv, no. 6, June, 1941, p.4.
8. 'The Next Step Forward: Towards the Rank and File of the Communist Party', Internal document of the W.I.L. pp. 1-2.
9. i.e. Vol. 5, no. 7. This rate of publication could not be sustained indefinitely.
10. The figure of 20,000 given by J. Higgins in 'Ten Years for the Locust', in *International Socialism*, no. 14, p.28 is far too high for regular circulation, and appears to be based on the figures given by Haston and Grant to the *Daily Telegraph* in July, 1942 - 'Council of Eight Behind Coal Propaganda Newspaper', 15th July, 1942. On the other hand, Herbert Morrison's estimate of 1,500 to 3,000 which appeared in the *Daily Express* of the 22nd July, 1942 is almost certainly too low. In view of the paper rationing, and on a rough calculation of the newsprint allocation, an average figure of 12,000 seems reasonable, though the

figure of 20,000 was certainly touched. Seven months earlier John Lawrence was estimating the circulation of *Socialist Appeal* at about 10,000 - Minutes of the C.C. of the R.S.L., 5th January, 1942.

11. Report of the National organiser to the C.C. of the W.I.L., 7th November, 1942. According to John Lawrence, eleven months before the total W.I.L. numbers had only amounted to about 50-60 in London and 23 in Glasgow.
12. Some 52 delegates attended the Fusion Conference of the R.S.L./W.I.L. in March 1944 representing the W.I.L. (Report on Fusion Conference of R.S.L./W.I.L. held on 11th and 12th March, 1944). They were selected on the basis of 1 per 6 members ('For Members Only').
13. *Defend the Soviet Union*, W.I.L. leaflet (undated, but put out in June 1941 on internal evidence).
14. 'An Appeal to Communist Party Members', in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. iii, no. 9, August 1941, pp. 1 and 4.
15. C.f. Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back*, London 1982, chapter 6, pp. 87-100.
16. Op. cit., n. 14 above, p.4.
17. A. Scott, *Does Russia's Entry Alter Britain's War?*, W.I.L. pamphlet, p.14. The reference is to R. Palme Dutt in *Labour Monthly*, August 1941. C.f. Op. cit., n.15 above, p.76 and n.7, p.85.
18. *The Communist Party and the War*, W.I.L. pamphlet.
19. *Britain's War Production in Chaos*, leaflet for a meeting in Holborn Hall chaired by Gerry Healy and addressed by Bill Elliott, Ted Grant, Harold Atkinson and Sid Bidwell, 22nd February, 1942.
20. Op. cit., n. 17, p.8.
21. C.f. Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back*, London, 1982, p.93. A fuller account occurs in R. Croucher, *Engineers at War*, London, 1982, pp. 152-3.
22. *Militant* (U.S.A.), vol. vi, no. 17, 25th April, 1942, p.5.
23. "A Group that Needs Watching", in *The Sunday Dispatch*, 9th November, 1941.
24. *Socialist Appeal*, November, 1941. C.f. W. Hunter, 'Marxists and the Second World War', in *Labour Review*, (old series), 1958, p.143, n.21.
25. Douglas Hyde, 'Conference Discussion', in *World News and Views*, vol. xxi, no. 43, 25th October, 1941, p.676.
26. "A Group that Needs Watching", in *The Sunday Dispatch*, 9th November, 1941. C.f. J.R. Campbell, 'How Leftism Helps Hitler' in *Labour Monthly*, vol. xxiii, no. 12, December, 1941, p.495, last paragraph.
27. 'More Facts About the Trotskyists', in *The Sunday Dispatch*, 16th November, 1941.
28. *Warning to All Anti-Nazis*, leaflet issued by the C.P.G.B. (their emphasis).
29. *Socialist Appeal*, December, 1941. C.f. W. Hunter, 'Marxists and the Second World War', in *Labour Review* (old series), 1958, pp. 143-4.
30. Ted Grant, 'A Challenge to the Communist Party', in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. iv, no. 3, December, 1941, p.2.
31. J.R. Campbell, 'How Leftism Helps Hitler', in *Labour Monthly*, vol xxiii, no. 12, December, 1941, pp. 492-8. On the contents of the rest of the article, c.f. Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back*, London, 1982, pp. 90-1, et seq.
32. Cited by W. Hunter, 'Marxists in the Second World War', in *Labour Review* (old series) 1958, p.144. C.f. Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back*, London, 1982, p.84 and n.50.
33. "The Campaign of Violence Continues", in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. iv, no.6, March, 1942, p.2.
34. "C.P. Organises Attacks Against 'Appeal' Sellers", in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. iv, no. 4, January 1942, p.4.
35. J. Dicks, "T.U. Militant Assaulted by Stalinists", in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. iv, no. 7, April 1942.
36. Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back*, London, 1982, p.83.
37. Pat MacVeigh, Interview with Sam Bornstein, September 1972.

38. "A young man with experience and vision anxious to serve his class and the endeavour to have a really New World social order; he merits your support" - "Southall Workers Support Sid Bidwell", in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. iv, no. 4, January, 1942.
39. Roy Tearse, Interview with Al Richardson, 6th July, 1978. Presumably this was in the "Home counties factory", producing "propellers and Spitfires" mentioned in 'Trotskyists Active', *Daily Worker*, 14th April, 1943, whose works committee is described as "dominated by several well known Trotskyists" who had "well consolidated their position" and "are always ready to exploit every grievance connected with the rating of the jobs which has an important bearing on production". George Weston was also there.
40. "2,500 Down Tools in Stay-in Strike at Midlands Factory", in *Socialist Appeal*, May, 1942; Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back*, London, 1982, pp. 104-5, 120, n.2.
41. The article was that appearing along with the photograph of the Burma atrocities in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. iv, no. 7, April, 1942.
42. *Evening News*, 30th April, 1942. C.f. "What *Socialist Appeal* said: The Minister of Home Security Questioned in the House of Commons", leaflet printed "in view of the threat to *Socialist Appeal* (a reprint of the original article, n.41, above).
43. Herbert Morrison, 'The Trotskyist Movement in Great Britain', Cabinet Memorandum, W.P. (44), 202, 13th April, 1944, p.3.
44. "Trotskyists Keep Money Secret", in *The Daily Mail*, 6th April, 1944.
45. I. Hay, *R.O.F.: The Story of the Royal Ordnance Factories 1939-48*, H.M.S.O., London, 1949, p.67.
46. P. Inman, *Labour in the Munitions Industries*, London, 1957, p.66.
47. C.f. above, p.60, and Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back*, London, 1982, pp. 104-5.
48. P. Inman, op. cit., pp. 414 and 417.
49. Inman, op. cit., pp.67, 346.
50. Roy Tearse, Conversation with Al Richardson, 3rd July, 1985.
51. "Stalinist Methods in R.O.F.s Nailed", in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. vii, no. 7, June, 1945, p.2.
52. I. Hay, op. cit., pp. 19-21.
53. Hay, op. cit., p.67.
54. Jock Haston, Interview with Al Richardson, 30th April, 1978.
55. Percy Downey, Interview with Sam Bornstein, 26th November, 1977.
56. Roy Tearse, 'Industrial News: The R.O.F.s', in *Party Organiser* (Internal Bulletin of the R.C.P.), vol. 1, no. 8, September 1946, p.9.
57. Percy Downey, Interview with Sam Bornstein, 26th November, 1977.
58. K. Coates, Letter to Sam Bornstein, 12th June, 1985.
59. 'Letter of the Wombwell Colliers: "Oust Hall' Plead Yorkshire Miners", in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. v, no. 3, December 1942, p.1; 'Daily Herald Reporter', "Pro-Nazis at Work to Upset Coalfields", in *The Daily Herald*, 13th July, 1942; T. Evans, "Pamphlet at Pit Urges Miners to Strike: Gives 'Plan for Power' ", in *The Daily Express*, 14th July, 1942.
60. Apart from attention from police spies sent into the W.I.L. at the start of the war (e.g. the 'Jones Case'), they had suffered several raids, on one occasion whilst the editorial board of *Youth for Socialism and Workers International News* was in session on 2nd January, 1941 (c.f. "British Workers Cold to Stalinist Pacifism" in *The Militant* (U.S.A.), vol. v, no. 10, 8th March, 1941).
61. i.e. Gerry Healy and Ajit Roy.
62. 'Our Industrial Correspondent', "Council of Eight Behind Coal Propaganda Newspaper", *Daily Telegraph*, 15th July, 1942; "Newsprint for Coalfield Propaganda", 16th July, 1942.
63. "Subversive Influence Inquiry", in *The Star*, 16th July, 1942.
64. "W.W.", "Pro-Nazi", in *World News and Views*, 18th July, 1942.
65. "Socialist Appeal Still at It", in *The Sunday Dispatch*, 30th August, 1942. The article begins with the statement that "a 'Workers' Challenge' station in Germany sends out directives to Trotskyists in Britain". The very same statement appears in John Mahon, *Hitler's Agents Exposed*, Communist Party pamphlet, 28th February, 1943, pp. 3-4. The 'Second Front' was a major campaign of the C.P. going on at the time. The assertion about

- Trotskyists wishing to stop the dispatch of arms to Russia occurs on p.15 of the same pamphlet. Interestingly enough, an article in the same paper a month earlier tells us that "the Communist Party, whose organ, the *Daily Worker* is still suppressed (although the Communists now support the war), is asking why the government permits publication of a periodical opposed to the government's war effort". 'Sunday Dispatch Reporter', "Another Parliament Question on Socialist Appeal", in the *Sunday Dispatch*, 19th July, 1942. When the *Daily Worker* finally did come out again, its first issue called upon the authorities to "pay attention to the activities of a small bunch of saboteurs..... out with them without delay!" - *Daily Worker*, 9th September, 1942.
66. Ted Grant, "New Allies of the Communist Party", in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. iv, no. 12, September 1942, p.3. Some I.L.P. militants in Glasgow were in favour of blocking arms shipments to the U.S.S.R., and the Communist Party had made a deceitful amalgam of that with the position of the Trotskyists.
 67. *Daily Telegraph*, 16th July, 1942.
 68. F. Machin, "Hypocrisy for Strikers to Urge Second Front", in the *Daily Herald*, 22nd July, 1942.
 69. "Paper for 'Socialist Appeal' ", in *The Daily Telegraph*, 23rd July, 1942.
 70. C.f. Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back*, London, 1982, p.115 and footnotes, 43 and 44, p.121.
 71. 'Our Industrial Correspondent', "Council of Eight Behind Coal Propaganda Newspaper", in the *Daily Telegraph*, 15th July, 1942. The issue of *Socialist Appeal* illustrated is vol. iv, no. 10, July 1942 ('Yorkshire Owners Provoke Pit Strike').
 72. 'Express Staff Reporter', "We Still Have Police Visits Says this Paper's Editor", in the *Daily Express*, 15th July, 1942.
 73. "C.P. Fears Leftism", in the *New Leader*, vol. xxxiv, no. 14, 13th June, 1942, p.1.
 74. W.H. Wainwright, *Clear Out Hitler's Agents*, C.P.G.B. pamphlet, August 1942, pp. 3,7,9,15. On the Cairo Forces' Parliament in general, c.f. R.F. Spector, *Freedom for the Forces*, N.C.C.L. pamphlet (undated); G. Hall, *The Cairo Forces' Parliament*.
 75. M.S., 'Men and Books: Agents of Hitler', in *World News and Views*, vol. xxii, no. 33, 15th August, 1942, p. 344. Some quite intemperate language from Wainwright himself is scattered over the same journal - that Trotskyists are a "filthy brood" (21st November, 1942) and "anti-Semitic", etc.
 76. 'Trotskyism', in *The Communist Party, Its Theory and Practice*, 'A Series of Outlines for Use in Classes', no. 3, March 1943, pp. 10-14.
 77. *Factory Workers: Be On Your Guard: Clear out the Bosses' Agents*, W.I.L. Leaflet (undated). C.f. *Socialist Appeal*, September, 1942.
 78. 'Preparing for Power' - special issue of *Workers International News*, vol. v, no. 6, September 1942, pp. 24-5, etc.
 79. The programme 'Preparing for Power' even got publicity from a review by Wainwright, in 'Fascists in Disguise', *World News and Views*, vol. xxiii, no. 48, 27th November, 1943. Several extracts from this "design for treachery" were printed, more or less truncated.
 80. "C.P. Comedy in Three Acts", in the *New Leader*, vol. xxxiv, no. 20, 25th July, 1942, p.5.
 81. "South London Militants Reject Stalinist Slander", in *Workshop News*, published by the W.I.L. Industrial Committee, no. 1, June, 1942, pp. 5-6.
 82. R. Croucher, *Engineers At War*, London, 1982, p.186.
 83. C.f. Op. cit., n.81 above, pp.181-7, and Bornstein and Richardson *Two Steps Back* London, 1982, pp. 105-6.
 84. Daisy Rawlings, Interview with Sam Bornstein, 7th September, 1976. She later joined the Revolutionary Communist Party.
 85. John Mahon, *Hitler's Agents Exposed*, C.P.G.B. pamphlet, 28th February, 1943, pp. 9-11, 13-16, 20 (his emphasis throughout). The same line - that Trotskyists are "Quislings" - is taken in 'The Truth About Trotskyism', in *Educational Leaflet No. 3*, C.P.G.B. (undated, but issued after March 1943 on internal evidence).
 86. Jock Haston, "Who Helps Hitler?", in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. v, no. 10, mid-July, 1943, pp. 1 and 4.

87. *Tribune*, 26th March, 1943. C.f. n. 65 above.
88. *Strikes and Subversive Movements*, Economic League War Series no. 16, February, 1943.
89. Roy Tearse, Interview with Al Richardson, 6th July, 1978. For Tearse's impact upon De Havillands, c.f. p.59 above. Among those who joined the W.I.L. group on Tyneside at the time was George Brown, father of Audrey Wise, who had broken with the Communist Party at a public meeting on the outbreak of war - 'Report of Enquiry Held at Newcastle, May 22nd/23rd, 1943' (Internal Document of the ILP), p.18 (Statement Submitted by M. Sadler): "On the Sunday that the Russian troops were marching into Poland I attended a C.P. meeting as a hostile critic to the subject of the address on 'How to Win the War', when Comrade George Brown, who had been an active party member of the C.P. for 6 or 7 years resigned that party from the floor of the meeting hall. He supplemented his verbal resignation with a vigorous denunciation of the C.P.'s attitude to the war".
90. *Socialist Appeal*, vol. v, no. 6, March, 1943, p.2, C.f. R. Croucher, *Engineers at War*, London, 1982, pp. 187-9.
91. *Solidarity*, no. 65/6, October/November, 1943, p.6.
92. C.f. n.44, above, and Jock Haston, 'Clyde Workers' Committee: The Next Step', in "Clyde Workers' Committee Revived", in *Socialist Appeal*, Mid-June 1943, pp. 1 and 4, and Croucher, op. cit., pp. 228-230.
93. Op. cit., n. 89 above.
94. *Socialist Appeal*, vol. v, no. 12, June, 1943.
95. E. Grant, 'The Rise and Fall of the Communist International', in *Workers International News*, vol. v, no. 11, June, 1943, pp. 1-5.
96. A.J. Greene, Review in *Tribune*, 30th July, 1943. C.f. J.E. Davies, *Mission to Moscow*, London, 1942, pp. 38-9: "To have assumed that this proceeding (the Radek/Piatakov Trial) was invented and staged as a project of dramatic political fiction would be to presuppose the creative genius of a Shakespeare and the genius of a Belasco in stage production". (!)
97. A.B. Elsbury, Letter to *Tribune*, 23rd July, 1943.
98. R. Groves, "Mission to Moscow is Miles from the Truth", in the *New Leader*, vol. xxv, no. 26, 4th September, 1943.
99. *World News and Views*, vol. xxiii, nos. 30 and 33, 24th July and 14th August, 1943, pp. 234 and 258.
100. *Warners' Fake Film*, W.I.L. Leaflet, p.2.
101. C.f. *Socialist Appeal*, vol. v, no. 11, Mid-May, 1943, pp. 3-4.
102. Reprinted from *Socialist Appeal*, vol. v, no. 16, August 1943, pp. 1 and 4.
103. 'Arrests Outside Cinema', in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. v, no. 16, August 1943, p.4.
104. For accounts of the strike, c.f. Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back*, London, 1982, pp. 106-113 and R. Croucher, *Engineers at War*, London, 1982, pp. 218-224. On pp. 221 and 228 he expresses doubt as to the influence of Trotskyism on the strike, no doubt misled by the anxiety of the strike committee to shield themselves from the attacks of the Communist Party and the National Press. These latter were not in any doubt about it, and the evidence at our disposal confirms their judgement. C.f. the statement quoted in *Two Steps Back*, pp. 107-8.
105. Information supplied by Bert Atkinson to Al Richardson, 29th October, 1977. C.f. Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back*, London, 1982, pp. 107, 112-3. For an example of Communist Support to Barrow A.E.U. before the war, c.f. 'Union Chairman Expelled', in *The Daily Worker*, 20th March, 1937.
106. Jack Owen, 'Trotskyism', in *The Daily Worker*, 4th October, 1943.
107. 'Dock Front', in *The Daily Worker* 8th October, 1943. C.f. Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back*, London, 1982, p. 110, and n. 25, p.120.
108. Jock Haston, 'Barrow Workers Fight for Living Wage', supplement to *Socialist Appeal* (leaflet) pp. 3-4.
109. Roy Tearse, Interview with Al Richardson, 6th July, 1978.
110. "£500 Gift to Strikers: Alleged Statement in Trotsky Case", in the *Evening News* 20th May, 1945. Tom Trewartha attended Tearse's trial to give evidence on his behalf.

111. Quoted in Gerald Wolfson, "Bevin Hits Employers Who 'Deliberately Provoke Strikes' ", in *The Daily Worker*, 25th September, 1943; c.f. 'Daily Mail Reporter', "Strikers: Government to Act", in *The Daily Mail*, 2nd October, 1943.
112. 'Our Industrial Correspondent' in *The People*, 3rd October, 1943. C.f. Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back*, London, 1982, p.111.
113. Trevor Evans, "Agitators Will be Outlawed in Works Areas", in the *Daily Express*, 1st October, 1943.
114. 'Our Industrial Correspondent', in *The People*, 3rd October, 1943.
115. Jock Haston, Interview with Al Richardson, 30th April, 1978.
116. " 'Appeal' is in Danger. Tories Seek to Suppress Our Voice. Paper Control Used for Political Victimisation", Statement of the Political Bureau of the W.I.L. and the Editorial Boards of *Socialist Appeal* and *Workers International News* in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. v, no. 22, November 1943, p.1; "Readers Warned: Paper Control Being Used to Suppress Our Voice", in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. v, no. 23, mid November 1943, p.1.
117. Charles Sutton, "Trotsky Group Mystery: Arm Workers Call", in the *Daily Mail*, 7th October, 1943.
118. Jim Hinchcliffe, Letter to *The South London Press*, 24th September, 1943.
119. H. Kanner, Letter dated 1st October, 1943.
120. Roy Tearse, Interview with Al Richardson, 6th July, 1978. For a similar story about escorting the blacklegs, c.f. R. Croucher, *Engineers at War*, London, 1982, p.222.
121. Croucher, op. cit., p.224 and 226 has some reservations as to the extent of the victory, as opposed to Bornstein and Richardson, op. cit., p.112. Trevor Evans of *The Daily Express* had no such reservations at the time.
122. Thesis of the October 1943 National Conference of the W.I.L. in *The World Revolution and the Tasks of the British Working Class*, W.I.L. pamphlet p.22 (italicised).
123. Trevor Evans, "Agitators Will Be Outlawed in Works Areas", in *The Daily Express*, 1st October, 1943.
124. R. Croucher, *Engineers at War*, London, 1982, pp. 224-6.
125. "Tanner Tanned at A.E.U. Conference", in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. v, no. 23, mid-November, 1943, p.1.
126. A.E.U., 'Report of Proceedings of the Twenty-Fourth Final Appeal Court Held at the Town Hall Southport', 10th July to 26th July, nos. 58-61, pp. 91-9.
127. Op. cit, n.122 above, p.21
128. Op. cit, n.122 above, pp. 24-5; c.f. *Socialist Appeal*, vol. v, no. 23, Mid-November, 1943, p.4.
129. *The World Revolution and the Tasks of the British Working Class*, p. 24; *Socialist Appeal*, vol. v, no. 23, mid-November 1943, p.4.
130. Ted Grant, 'Our Tasks in the Coming Revolution', in *Workers International News*, vol. v, no. 5, January 1944, pp. 11-12.
131. R. Croucher, *Engineers at War*, London, 1982, p. 230 and ref.
132. C.f. p.70 above.
133. R. Croucher, op. cit., p.247, n.99. This was obviously Owen's main function for the C.P. at that time. C.f. his behaviour at Barrow, in Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back*, London, 1982, p.109.
134. Jack Owen, *Spotlight on the Clyde*, pamphlet published by the Scottish Committee, C.P.G.B. (undated, but the fact that the last date mentioned in it is 3rd April shows that it was written about this time) - p.22.
135. C.f. p.73 above.
136. 'Why Rolls Struck', in *New Propeller*, December, 1943.
137. Op. cit., n. 136, *ibid*.
138. H. McShane, "15,000 Out over Women's Wage Agreement", in *The Daily Worker*, 3rd November, 1943.
139. Tom Burns (Jock Haston), "25,000 Strike Defeat: Women's Wages to Undercut Men. C.P. Aids Bosses in Blow at A.E.U.", in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. v, no. 23, mid-November, 1943.

140. Harry McShane, "Scots Engineers reject 'Return to Work' Appeals", in *The Daily Worker*, 5th November, 1943.
141. Harry McShane, "15,000 Out Over Women's Wage Agreement", in *The Daily Worker*, 3rd November, 1943.
142. 'Why Rolls Struck', in *The New Propeller*, December, 1943.
143. John Gollan, *Guilty Men of the Clyde*, C.P.G.B. pamphlet (no date, but late 1943 on internal evidence), p.19 (his emphasis).
144. 'True and False', in *The Daily Worker*, 3rd November, 1943. For Bevin's reference to the Communists as "fleas", c.f. Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back*, London, 1982, p.111. On the Rolls Strike as a whole, c.f. p.95, and more fully, R. Croucher, *Engineers at War*, London, 1982, pp. 285-92.
145. Croucher, op. cit., p.293.
146. Roy Tearse, Interview with Al Richardson, 6th July, 1978.
147. J.R. Campbell, *Your Part in Victory: An Appeal to the Workers in the Mining, Shipbuilding, Engineering and Building Industries*, pamphlet of the Scottish District Committee of the C.P.G.B. (undated, but early in 1944 on internal evidence).
148. 'J.B. Stuart' (Sam Gordon), 'The Fusion of the British Trotskyists; the Attack Against the New Party; Immediate Perspectives and Tasks', *Internal Bulletin* of the S.W.P. (U.S.A.), vol. iii, June, 1944; c.f. P. Frank, 'The British Trotskyist Movement and the International', part i, in *Fourth International* ("for the regroupment of the British Section of the Fourth International") 1955, pp.6-7.
149. Dave Granick, Interview with Sam Bornstein, May 1972.
150. The R.S.L. had taken an official decision not to publish it; c.f. above, p.51, n.118.
151. C.f. Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back*, London, 1982, p.81.
152. C.f. pp.69-70, above. Tearse came straight into the W.I.L. in London, but the others remained in the I.L.P.
153. Annual Conference, Easter 1942 - *New Leader*, vol. xxxiv, no. 5, 11th April, 1942, p.4.
154. Op. cit. n. 153 above, p.5 ('On Russia'). C.f. also the North East Divisional Conference, January 1944 - "North East Reviews Possible Allies of I.L.P.", in *The New Leader*, vol. xxxv, no. 48, 5th February, 1944, p.6.
155. Op. cit. n.153 above, p.5.
156. Annual Conference, Easter 1943, in *The New Leader*, vol. xxxv, no. 8, 1st May, 1943, p.4.
157. F.A. Ridley, 'Through Socialist Eyes', in *The New Leader*, vol xxxiii, no. 50. 1st February, 1942, p.2; Sid Bidwell, "Trotskyist Tells off Ridley", in *The New Leader*, vol. xxxiii, no. 52, 7th March, 1942, p.4.
158. North East Divisional Conference, 1944 - "North East Reviews Possible Allies of I.L.P.", in *The New Leader*, vol. xxxv, no. 48, 5th February, 1944, p.6. C.f. London Divisional Conference, 1943 - "I.L.P. on its Toes", in *The New Leader*, vol. xxxiv, no. 50, 20th February, 1943, p.5 (resolution tied by 13 votes apiece).
159. "Four Expelled I.L.P.ers Join R.C.P.", in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. vii, no. 7, June 1945. C.f. "Report of Enquiry Held at Newcastle", I.L.P. document 22nd, 23rd May 1943. (Earlier enquiry).
160. She had been so well established inside the I.L.P. that she was author of the pamphlet put out by the London Division on post-war housing policy; *After Rockets - Housing Rackets*.
161. Bob Wilsker, Interview with Al Richardson and Sam Bornstein, 10th November, 1984.
- The organisation of German and Austrian refugees they set up in London was called the I.K.D. (German International Communists), Committee Abroad.
162. C.f. the quotation of D.D. Harber from it in "On the Attitude of Our Movement Towards the War", internal document of the R.S.L. (Quoting the issue of 20th July, 1940).
163. "Release Pierre Frank", in *Youth for Socialism*, vol. iii, no. 7, April 1941; "French Trotskyist Released", in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. v, no. 23, mid-November 1943, p.1.
164. *Socialist Appeal*, mid-October, 1945. When he first came to Britain illegally he stayed with Rose Carson (Selner) in hiding. At that time she was still in the R.S.L.

165. C.f. n. 148, above.
166. Fred Bunby, Interview with Sam Bornstein, 26th March, 1978. C.f. "D.G.", (Douglas Garbutt), "Report on the Fourth International Movement in India", undated internal bulletin of the R.C.P., and G.J. Lerski, *Origins of Trotskyism in Ceylon*, California, 1968, pp. 260-6.
167. 'Letter from Cairo', "Egyptian Trotskyism Grows", in *Workers International News*, vol. v, no. 4, October/November, 1943. C.f. Appendix Two below.
168. C.f. 'Misha', Palestinian Trotskyist interviewed in 'On the History of Trotskyism in Palestine' in *InterContinental Press*, vol. x, no. 38, 24th October, 1972, pp. 115-6.
169. Pat McVeigh, Interview with Sam Bornstein, September, 1973. On Bartolomeo's death, c.f. *Socialist Appeal*, February, 1946, p.3.
170. 'A Comrade in the R.A.F.', 'Fight for Democracy in the Forces', in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. v, no. 2, November, 1942.
171. 'Infantryman', "Soldiers Vote for Workers' Britain", in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. v, no. 7, mid-March, 1943. for the intervention of two comrades from the R.S.L. in a debate in Italy, c.f. Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back*, London, 1982, p.132.
172. *Socialist Appeal*, vol. vi, no. 4, August, 1944; vol. vi, no. 5, September, 1944. On the similar case of Cliff Stanton, c.f. above, pp. 39-40.
173. D.N. Pritt, Grigg, *Goebbels and Pte. Smith: An Examination of Anti-Soviet Propaganda in the Forces*, 'Russia Today' pamphlet, October, 1943, pp. 9, 13, 15. For another example of the ferment in the forces, c.f. Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back*, London, 1982, p.119.
174. Arthur Leadbetter, "Benghazi Forces Parliament", letter of 15th September, 1944, in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. vi, no. 7, mid-October, 1944, p.2.
175. "Our Tasks in the Coming Revolution", speech of Ted Grant to the 1943 Conference of the W.I.L. in *Workers International News*, vol. v, no. 5, January, 1944, p.11.

Chapter Four

Rebuilding The British Section, 1943 - 1944

The demise of the R.S.L., and the fact that only one of its fragments any longer had much in common with the views of the International Secretariat, gave new urgency to the attempts of the I.S. to unite the W.I.L. with the Fourth International. As the W.I.L. had accepted and implemented the American Military Policy, and the majority of the R.S.L. had rejected it, the basis now existed for a fresh attempt at unity. All previous attempts had been aborted.

The first was in the Spring of 1939 in line with the decision of the British Commission of the founding conference of the Fourth International. Delegates from the R.S.L. along with Sherry Mangan, the International representative, met delegates of the W.I.L. to offer immediate fusion on the basis of equal representatives on the executive of the fused organisation, or failing this a period of discussion ending with a conference to decide on the programme and tactics of the united organisation. The W.I.L. made no response, reluctant to become involved in the witches' cauldron already bursting and bubbling inside the R.S.L.¹

After the Emergency conference of the Fourth International in New York, in May 1940. had called for the unification of the W.I.L. and the R.W.L. with the British Section,² the R.S.L. again contacted the W.I.L. with an 'Open Letter', pointing out that as the W.I.L. was turning away from the Labour Party work the political differences were widening, but nonetheless proposing a joint discussion bulletin and joint sessions of the two Central Committees.³ Again, nothing came of it.

As by now the W.I.L. had accepted the American Military Policy and the R.S.L. was entangled with pacifism, the political ground had shifted, and the next overtures for unity came from the W.I.L., in the shape of a request for discussions "to evaluate the possibilities of a political and organisational merger".⁴ The reply of the R.S.L. was simply to send their programmatic documents and the *Political Statement* of their last annual conference and invite comment on them. In so placing the difference between the two

groups on a political basis instead of a personal or organisational one, the R.S.L. had, as the W.I.L. put it, made "a radical shift in your former attitude towards the differences between our organisations, since hitherto you have consistently proclaimed that these differences were of a personal not a political character. We have always maintained that a fusion will arise and be successful only on a political basis".⁵ "This split took place over three years ago", replied the R.S.L., "and it is evident from your press, that political differences have developed during the intervening period".⁶

It was indeed the case. In September 1941 the R.S.L. Conference voted to reject the military policy, and the W.I.L. reply, whilst disagreeing with entrism as "a panacea for all situations", with the perspective of Fascism and with the 'Third Labour Government' slogan of the R.S.L., made a point of saying that there was "no mention" of "the military policy of the Fourth International" in the propaganda of the R.S.L., and that they had specifically rejected the slogan of arming the working class under workers' control.⁷ It was made perfectly clear that the "political differences" referred to by the R.S.L. were precisely those on which there was complete agreement between the W.I.L. and the International Secretariat. The R.S.L. then broke off relations, describing the W.I.L. leadership as "politically dishonest" and their organisation as "deceiving the workers, by pandering to their chauvinism".⁸

This was not at all in accord with the opinions of the I.S. On 21st June 1942 they wrote to the R.S.L. Conference again urging unity discussions:

"In our opinion, your attitude towards the W.I.L. is utterly false. Without ignoring personal difficulties from the past, it is necessary to recognise that your false attitude flows from a false political appreciation of this group. You see in it a centrist group 'moving away from us'. This is an opinion we can by no means share....."

"..... to speak of 'centrism', 'defencism', 'chauvinism', etc., is simply false. It is necessary to say clearly; the W.I.L. stands entirely on the ground of the principles and methods of the F(ourth) I(nternational) and it should find its place in our ranks as soon as possible".⁹

The R.S.L. Conference of June 1942 rejected the proposal of the I.S. for immediate fusion, and proposed instead the holding of joint internal discussions leading to a delegate conference in six months time to assess what basis for fusion (if any) had emerged.¹⁰ The W.I.L. accepted these two conditions and proposed two more, that the discussions be regulated by a joint committee of the two groups to arrange a series of debates on all the major political points at issue.¹¹ Harber accepted this, but proposed an alternative agenda.¹² There was a limit on how long this playing for time could go on, and shortly before Jackson was to leave on the voyage, that cost him his life, he spelled out the realities with crystal clarity: "I believe that you are going to have to decide between going with the Left or submitting to

the International and fusing with the W.I.L. on their basis".¹³

For some time the press of the American S.W.P. had been giving a boost to the W.I.L.,¹⁴ and in July 1942 a series of articles appeared in the *Militant* praising the group's activities over the pseudonym of 'L. Lawrence', which ran on into the Autumn. A particularly adulatory note was struck in that appearing on the 8th August, which described the group as an "adherent of the programme of the Fourth International", being supported by "dozens and dozens of shop stewards" and "hosts of contacts" with "the admiration and support of wide layers of workers".¹⁵ A storm of protest arose from the official section, where Tom Mercer and John Archer got the Central Committee to draft a letter of protest.¹⁶ At the same time the International Secretariat forbade the R.S.L. to make any further public criticisms of the W.I.L.¹⁷

By this time the International Secretariat was almost totally dependent upon the S.W.P. of the United States. Since the outbreak of war even communication with the British Section had become episodic, and as the conflict spread relations were cut with the sections on the European continent. The I.S. came to rely almost exclusively upon the resources of the S.W.P., an organisation with a fondness for handling political problems with organisational methods.¹⁸ Contact with sections abroad came to depend upon S.W.P. members in the forces or the merchant navy, or the opportunities for travel afforded to Sherry Mangan by his job as a reporter for the Time/Life combine. "The I.S. and the I.E.C. which had been designated at the Emergency Conference of 1940", observed Natalia Trotsky, "had only a vegetative political existence and led an almost non-existent organic activity during the whole war".¹⁹ Their theoretical arsenal consisted, in the main, of Trotsky's perspectives, which in the context of rapid and violent changes could not be expected to last out the War. Incapable of building an International by Trotsky's methods - politically - they opted for those of Zinoviev, a rag-bag of manoeuvres, organisational shifts and improvisations, interspersed with ex-cathedra pronouncements and appeals to their authority. This was all the more dangerous because War had atomised the sections of the Fourth International and cut them off from each other, and, as isolated as was the I.S., they had developed a wide range of differences that could only be ironed out by asserting the political unity of the international programme of Marxism. But the impotence of the I.S. and its lack of authority led it instead to cobble together 'sections' on a catch-all basis, reproducing the mess of the 1938 British 'unification' on a world scale.

As far as Britain was concerned, even though the I.S. were completely out of sympathy with the R.S.L., they could not simply expel or demote it to sympathising status without calling an International Conference, which apart from being difficult in wartime would lay themselves open to criticism by those Trotskyists who shared the view that the I.S. was capitulating to defencism.²⁰ Similarly, although the W.I.L. was in full political agreement

with them, they could not just accept them as the British Section, for that would be to admit that the International had been wrong from the very beginning, and undermine their authority yet further. So by claiming the issue to be one of acceptance of "international democratic centralism" (i.e. their own authority) they were obliged to promote their policy by manoeuvre and steer clear of discussion over the political issues. But in Trotsky's estimate, the Fourth International was to be an organisation built around a programme - the *Transitional Programme*. "What makes an organisation a section of the International?", asked the W.I.L. "Merely the *formal connection*? Nothing of the sort. This is of tremendous importance, but what is decisive is the *political programme*".²¹

The unification of the R.S.L. and the W.I.L. was getting nowhere, and was leading in a direction away from the intentions of the International Secretariat. The discussions that the I.S. insisted upon only emphasised the gulf between the two groups. The more the R.S.L. criticised the W.I.L.'s military policy, the more they drew away from the I.S., which became all the more insistent on a unification with the W.I.L. But the R.S.L. declined and fragmented, until there was no longer anything left with which to unite. What worsened the situation in the view of the I.S. was that the one faction of the R.S.L. that still supported them was not only no larger than the others, but was in fact moving towards fusion with the W.I.L. on its own account.

For some time the success of the W.I.L. had been exercising an attraction upon those of the R.S.L. who were demoralised by the sterility of its unceasing factional war, and wanted to make their contributions to the class battles looming up as the War drew to a close. Apart from those who had come over to the W.I.L. in ones and twos, supporters of the "Trotskyist Opposition" could only look with admiration upon the W.I.L.'s success, for example at Cortonwood. "There is no doubt that S(ocialist) A(ppeal) has made a definite impression", they wrote; "Despite our differences with the W.I.L., we must welcome the turning of the miners towards Trotskyism. We feel sorry for comrade D.D.H(arber) that they did not flock to the L(abour) P(arty) first".²² Discontent expressed itself in envious reports of the W.I.L.'s progress at R.S.L. Central Committee meetings,²³ grumblings at the refusal of its newspaper to defend the W.I.L. against Stalinist slander, and in proposals from rank and file T.O. members for an immediate fusion of the faction with W.I.L. on its own account.²⁴ John Lawrence even took a paid job doing what he called "certain technical work" on the W.I.L.'s behalf whilst still a member of the T.O. and the R.S.L.²⁵ Just before the June 1942 Conference of the R.S.L. they decided that if they failed to gain a majority for their motion of immediate fusion with the W.I.L. they would themselves leave and unite with the W.I.L. on their own account.²⁶ When they failed to carry their policy at the conference, they issued another factional document giving support to W.I.L. on all the principled questions and in effect preparing to split the R.S.L.²⁷

None of this at all was to the liking of the International Secretariat. It so happened that its representative, Sam Gordon, was due in England with the ship he served on as a sailor, and on July 18th he spent many hours persuading Lawrence and the rest of his faction to adopt the I.S. approach, which he summarised as "remain in the R.S.L. and win the best of the membership to the position of the 4th", "win W.I.L. to democratic centralism", and "friendliest relationship and co-operation to be established with W.I.L."²⁸ This reversed the plan to unite with W.I.L. immediately, and directed the new policy of the group as much against the W.I.L. as the R.S.L., which, as he stressed, was, "unlike the W.I.L.", "a section of the Fourth".²⁹ But in the eyes of the R.S.L. they had already proved their disloyalty, and their expulsions were confirmed on October 3rd, 1942. The I.S. policy had produced yet another little independent Trotskyist group. Sam Gordon's advice was that "the T.O. must make public its fundamental documents, develop its independent views in opposition to W.I.L. as well as R.S.L. in a regular, even if modest, publication."³⁰

The result of their manoeuvring towards the W.I.L. was to create another little faction inside that organisation. Inside the W.I.L. Gerry Healy had been involved in a number of personal disputes with the leadership of Grant and Haston. By 1943 Healy had a record of "light minded irresponsibility" and "continued disruptive acts", and had resigned, or threatened to resign, from the organisation on at least three occasions.³¹ When Haston and the others went to Ireland to establish a centre for illegally distributing the newspaper,³² Healy arrived shortly afterwards though he had not been a member of the original group chosen to go. There he resigned after a quarrel about local activity, threatening to join the Irish Labour Party "to fight our organisation".³³ This was his second resignation that year, and on that occasion, as on others, it was Jock Haston who persuaded Healy to reconsider, and the others to accept him, and he was sent back with a note to the British comrades to put his talents to better use. This he did, and worked hard and to some effect as the group's industrial organiser. But three years and one resignation later found him locked in another dispute with Grant, in which Grant first made the accusation repeated ever since, that Healy was "ultra left".³⁴ At another Central Committee on the 7th February, 1943 Healy announced that "he was resigning from the organisation on the following day; his action was not motivated by political differences but his personal inability to continue further work in an organisation in conjunction with J. Haston, M. Lee and E. Grant".³⁵ Again he was re-admitted, but forfeited his place on the Political Bureau, the Central Committee, and the editorial board of *Socialist Appeal*.³⁶

Haston placed great value upon Healy's organisational talents, but such a track record did not fit him well for the part of defender of international democratic centralism in which the International Secretariat was to cast

him. Moreover, he had not been entirely uncritical of the International Secretariat's previous operations. He was the origin of the famous crack that "Cannon came to Britain and unified four groups into seven"³⁷ and regarded the refusal of the W.I.L. to enter the 'Peace and Unity' agreement of 1938 as a necessary separation of the proletarian elements from a milieu of tired revolutionaries and bankrupt petty bourgeois.³⁸ But after his removal from the Political Bureau, Healy set to work to build a faction on behalf of the I.S. Gathering around him W.I.L. dissidents like Betty Healy, Jim Dicks, Bob Shaw, Ben Elsbury and Hilda Pratt³⁹ he organised enough support in the South-West London Branch to act as a base to attack the leadership of Haston, Grant and Tearse.

Healy's political differences were first announced in a document entitled *Our Most Important Task* issued on 10th August, 1943, for the forthcoming annual conference. Choosing his words very carefully he wrote:

"If it is true that Cannon adopted a bureaucratic outlook when dealing with the British situation, this tendency will continually reflect itself in the International. It can only be fought by a section of the International, not by an organisation outside the International..... To remain outside the International is to maintain an ultra-left sectarian attitude in the struggle against bureaucratic tendencies in the I.S."

To the argument that the I.S. would be forced to recognise that W.I.L. was the only effective Fourth International organisation, and that the R.S.L. was near extinction, he replied:

"..... it would be a rash illusion, however, to imagine that because they realise our growing influence, they will recognise us on this basis. This is far too superficial; we should, in my opinion, clearly understand that Cannon and his supporters will not shift an inch from what they term the democratic centralist basis of the International".

He proposed a three-point plan for immediate unity on a minimum basis, devoid of any political content but "sincerity", and added that "if these terms are rejected by the R.S.L. then the I.S. should be requested to suggest terms upon which an immediate fusion should take place."⁴⁰

The W.I.L. Political Bureau reply demolished Healy's platform of international democratic centralism to the last brick. Starting by setting straight the record on the 1938 events, they reminded him that their reason for rejecting the fusion was not on the grounds of "petty-bourgeois politics", as Healy maintained, but precisely because it *violated democratic centralism* by allowing a minority to pursue a tactic (open work) rejected by a majority of the organisation.⁴¹ "What determines a principled fusion" they explained, "is its *political basis*, not the day or the time for which fusion is proposed; not the sincerity or non-sincerity of the participants". "A genuine unification will not depend on how high the banner is raised, but upon the policy written on the banner", they reminded him: that alone

could create "clear political ideas, agreement for practical tasks and a united Trotskyist party, nationally and internationally".⁴² So when Healy's South West London Branch moved an amendment at the October Conference of the W.I.L. that "it rests upon the I.S. to formulate its terms for the solution of the crisis of British Trotskyism".⁴³ It failed to gain any support, and Healy himself failed to be elected to the leading bodies of the organisation.⁴⁴

Healy then shifted himself more closely behind the position of the International Secretariat. He now considered that "Trotsky approved of the methods of unification" in 1938, and that by refusing to abide by the decisions of the World Congress "W.I.L. has occupied a position which could be termed international Menshevism on the question of world organisation".⁴⁵

On the surface it may seem extraordinary that if Healy's Minority believed that the W.I.L. was Menshevik and national in its concept of democratic centralism they did not bring out a platform document and form a formal faction on the basis of these views. But in fact they denied that they had any political differences with the Majority at all. But since they failed to gain seats at the Conference, this attitude, in effect, cut them off from representation on all the leading bodies of the group. For they could not be given autonomous representation unless they declared themselves a faction and asked for these rights, which could only be accorded them on the basis of a declaration of *political* differences.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, Healy's group was already in contact with the Trotskyist Opposition in the R.S.L., and Denzil Harber wrote in to say that "one thing is quite obvious - that Healy himself is most certainly looking for allies, presumably against you and Jock, and has, in fact, already found them in J. L(awrence) and C(ooper)".⁴⁷

So by 1943 the International Secretariat had factions operating inside both the W.I.L. and the R.S.L. agitating for immediate unity of the two groups. Unfortunately for this complicated policy, there was no longer a section for the W.I.L. to unite with. So to maintain the fiction of "international democratic centralism" which the I.S. insisted should be the basis of the unification, the R.S.L. had first to be recreated, and then trundled through the motions of uniting with the W.I.L. This was going to be awkward, to say the least, as no single discipline could be enforced upon its three factions any more, so that the reborn R.S.L. could not itself lay any claim to be "democratic centralist". None of these considerations daunted the International Secretariat, and on the 26th September, 1943 it used the powers vested in it by the statutes of the Fourth International to call a conference to reconstitute the British Section, whose main task would be to decide on proposals to present to W.I.L. for the immediate fusion of the two groups. The basis of the fusion was to be acceptance of the statutes and programme of the Fourth International, but national policy, "the tactical application of the International programme", was to be left to the majority vote of the fusion conference of W.I.L. and R.S.L., "subject to

international decision and review". To leave the field free in future for more Byzantine intrigues the I.S. was careful to add:

"In view of the fact that the fusion, which can and must now take place without delay, will leave unresolved a number of important differences of opinion between the various groups and tendencies, with a number of questions remaining unclarified, a serious discussion must take place within the ranks of the organisation..... to which other sections of the F(ourth) I(nternational) should be invited to participate".⁴⁸

Harber's Central Committee accepted the I.S. instructions "under protest", and wrote to the other factions to form a reconstitution committee.⁴⁹ Three days later they decided to organise their group, now demoted from its position as the leadership of the R.S.L., into a faction with the name of "The Militant Group". It was the ultimate betrayal as far as the 'Left Fraction' was concerned:

"It is clear that this action, taken by the old tired out bureaucrats, was taken not so much against the Left as against the R.S.L. They are finished. They have no intention of any further participation in revolutionary politics, but they cannot bear to step aside nor can they tolerate the idea of being put aside. Rather than allow the organisation to carry on without them as its leadership they are determined to wreck it".⁵⁰

For by now the Left felt that they had every hope of becoming the leadership of the R.S.L. In 1941 they had only 7 supporters, but at the 1942 Conference their average vote was 25, and by September 1943 they were claiming the support of about 37 members (of whom 36 had been expelled).⁵¹ They had supporters in the forces, also, who would be disenfranchised at the reconstitution conference. They looked upon the whole process of reconstitution and fusion as the elimination of "Bolshevism as the kernel of British F.I. Policy" and the "liquidation" of the British Section into the W.I.L., a chauvinist organisation, and they "accepted all International instructions under protest pointing out what would inevitably happen".⁵²

The International Secretariat's representative, Sherry Mangan, opened the proceedings of the reconstitution conference on 1st of January, 1944, with a speech calling the W.I.L. a "problem", condemning the struggle of the R.S.L. factions as "sectarian", and calling for unity. But as to the unification question itself, it was difficult to see what they would agree on, for the factions were so evenly matched that a majority could not be organised for any one point of view.⁵³

The proposals of the 'Trotskyist Opposition' were taken first, to unite on the basis of accepting the statutes and programme of the Fourth International, and to organise joint meetings of the R.S.L. and W.I.L. local groups to elect delegates to go to the fusion conference. This suggestion was

to make the T.O.'s numerical concentration in London count all the more, and allow it to combine forces with Healy's Minority inside the W.I.L.⁵⁴ The main point of the 'Militant Group's' proposals was that within the fused organisation the entry faction was to continue to organise itself around *The Militant*, to which Lawrence was opposed, and that the fused group should not call itself a party "in view of the extreme weakness of its numbers".⁵⁵ The Left, on its part, had no unity proposals at all, and as the other two groups were prepared to vote against each other's proposals, Robinson made it clear that the Left would vote against both of them, making sure that no fusion resolution would get through at all. So after the defeat of the T.O. resolution Lawrence announced that his group would abstain when voting took place on those of the 'Militant', which were then carried by 43 votes for, 34 abstentions, and 21 against.⁵⁶ Then Sherry Mangan moved acceptance of the I.S. resolution of September 26th (which included reconstitution of the R.S.L. and fusion with the W.I.L.) which the conference carried unanimously.

Conference then accepted the proposal of the Trotskyist Opposition that there should be a parity committee to negotiate fusion with W.I.L., on which each of the factions should be represented and have the right to put forward their particular points of view. The Left refused to put up any candidates at all, as they pointed out that giving minorities rights of free expression outside the revolutionary organisation was a breach of democratic centralism, and the parity committee of 7 was made up exclusively of 4 supporters of the T.O. and 3 of Harber's 'Militant' group. The meeting then ratified the fusion policy by a vote of 74 to 29, the Left alone voting against.⁵⁷

The Central Committee of W.I.L. agreed on its own fusion proposals on January 15th and 16th, allowing Mangan to be present as observer at the second session. They agreed to fusion on the basis of the statutes and programme of the Fourth International, leaving national policy to be decided by the Unity conference, that votes should be cast freely by the delegates present at it, that the new Central Committee should be elected on the basis of the size of the factions at the conference, and that it should have control of all the external press, whether 'open' or entrust.⁵⁸

The five W.I.L. delegates met the R.S.L. representatives to decide on the basis, size and scope of their proposed joint committee on January 21st, 1944. They accepted that the political basis of unity should be the *Transitional Programme*, leaving its national application to the majority vote of the Unity Conference. They agreed to keep *The Militant* as the paper of their entrust faction, and that *Socialist Appeal* and *Workers International News* should be journals for all the group, with the *Miners Militant* as the organ of the group's fraction working in the Miners' Federation, all the papers, of course, submitting to the control of the Central Committee of the new group. The joint negotiating committee was to consist of 5 delegates each from the W.I.L. and the R.S.L. with Arthur Cooper as Secretary, and

was to act as a standing orders and conference arrangements committee, empowered to decide on secondary matters such as constitution, name, press, make-up of leadership, etc., to which any member of either organisation in the meantime could submit documents and resolutions.⁵⁹ All was now set for the Unity Conference, and all the factions set to work feverishly preparing documents, resolutions, caucus meetings, etc., and making a careful survey of the numbers of their supporters to make sure that every vote would count.⁶⁰

Sherry Mangan was also busy, arranging the faction by which the International Secretariat would intervene inside the future British Section. As Harber noted:

"This 'important' observer of the I.S., while treating the W.I.L. leadership with contempt equal to that with which he treats us, has gone round with J(ohn) L(awrence)'s help to all W.I.L. members who on any grounds (largely personal) are in opposition to the leadership with the object of forming them into an opposition faction to link up with J(ohn) L(awrence) after fusing (the latter's assurances at the conferences that his faction would 'dissolve' after fusion are now seen in their true light). Thus an unprincipled hotch-potch headed by Healy has been formed....."

In general, the conclusions which some of us had already reached regarding the activities of T.P. have been fully confirmed. He, acting no doubt under instructions, regards it as his task to build up in Britain a leadership of stooges completely subservient to the Americans and he is collecting all the demoralised and careerist elements of both the R.S.L. and the W.I.L. for this purpose".⁶¹

The Conference, meeting in Queen's Square on the 11th and 12th March, 1944, brought together 69 delegates from all the factions (52 from W.I.L., 7 from the Militant Group, 6 from the T.O. and 4 from the Left) and about the same number of visitors. It started with the Left trying to refer back the report of the standing orders committee, which they claimed had disenfranchised their forces' members, and missed off the agenda their resolutions on sabotage in countries waging war on Russia, the National Question, the Italian Revolution, and on calling an International Conference. They moved the reference back of standing orders and an alternative agenda including the additional resolutions, but were defeated. They would have been in a stronger position if they had taken part on the Joint Negotiating Committee, which implied that they did not accept the authority of the Conference at all. Their request to be allowed to cast votes on a mandate system for their forces members was also rejected, as this was in contradiction to normal Bolshevik practice.⁶²

Conference now moved to a discussion on the main fusion resolution, which "closed discussion" on all past organisational conflicts that had "engendered deep cleavages", in the past, in order to introduce "a real

comradeship into the discussions". This was too much for the supporters of the International Secretariat, and Hilda Pratt on behalf of the Healy Minority and the T.O. moved its deletion, and tried to substitute a phrase "all such discussion is closed until the next pre-conference discussion". Aware that this was a device to keep factional antagonisms running, both the W.I.L. leaders and the Militant Group opposed it, and conference rejected it by a vote of 50 to 11, with 4 abstentions.

The next session was devoted to the Military Policy discussion. Ted Grant proposed the W.I.L./T.O. resolution along the lines of the American Military policy, seconded by Goffe of the T.O. It differentiated between the defencism of the capitalists and that of the workers, which "stems largely from entirely progressive motives of preserving their own class organisations and democratic rights from destruction at the hands of fascism", stated the duty of revolutionaries to be to drive a wedge between the two concepts, and supported the armed training of workers under trade union auspices as "not based merely on the rejection of the defence of the capitalist fatherland but on the conquest of power by the working class and the defence of the proletarian fatherland".⁶³ Leigh Davis, seconded by Denzil Harber, proposed the 'Resolution on National Defence' of the Militant Group, which rejected any policy that stated or implied that the workers should resist foreign invasion before they had taken state power, whether couched in open class-collaborationist terms or "independent" working-class military struggle against invasion within the bourgeois state".⁶⁴ The Left's resolution on military policy was defended by Tom Mercer, seconded by John Robinson. Lenin's policy for the First War was "entirely applicable to the present conflict", defencism of any sort was "a manifestation of bourgeois ideology", the American Military Policy was "internationalism" in the spirit of Kautsky", driving the workers "into the blind alley of defencism, disillusionment, and demoralisation". The Military Policy was thus the result of "the intense ideological pressure exerted by the bourgeoisie through the instrumentality of the reformist leadership" in such countries as the U.S.A. and Britain with privileged proletariats and colonial empires. Thus "in America and Britain the Fourth International is following in the footsteps of the 2nd and 3rd Internationals".⁶⁵ The Left's resolution was supported by their vote alone, and one abstention; the Militant Group's gained only eleven and an abstention; and that of the W.I.L./T.O. carried the day, with only eleven votes against - something of a foregone conclusion, since the delegates from the W.I.L. alone could outvote all the rest of the conference.⁶⁶

Conference now moved to a debate of the question of Labour Party entry. John Archer moved the resolution of the Militant Group, which traced the history of entry and Trotsky's theory of it, defining it as the revolutionary group "taking its place on the inside of the United Front". Entry had taken place in Britain under different conditions from the Trotskyist movement elsewhere, when the radicalisation of the workers had

been delayed, putting the Trotskyists in a better position within the reformist party when it came along. The coming of war had delayed the leftward movement, not eradicated it. In conditions of stagnation of political life in the Labour Party, industrial work would take priority for a time, which the W.I.L. had proved in the short run. But this industrial opposition to the political truce "in its turn forces the workers to turn to the political weapon which they have built up" - the Labour Party. It would involve a breaking of the political truce by the reformist leaders and "put a new life into local Labour parties". So whilst a certain amount of "outside" industrial work was permissible, the entry tactic remained viable, and most important for the future. The method and perspective were to be entirely vindicated in a year's time:

"But it must be clearly recognised that the present situation cannot last indefinitely and may perhaps continue but a short time longer. Once the move to the Left assumes mass proportions and thus inevitably changes the whole activity and internal life of the Labour Party along the lines described above, 'outside work' will cease to be profitable".⁶⁷

John Robinson introduced the Left's resolution on the entrism perspective. It defined Labour Party work as central to all the other work of the revolutionary organisation - in trades unions, the armed forces, and even the I.L.P. It was certainly not "to be conceived as simply a raiding tactic into the L(about) P(arty) for the purpose of winning a few workers to the 4th International". As the mass radicalisation of the workers would at most take a few months, a long period of growth for an open group was excluded. The resolution condemned the simultaneous operation of open and entrism tactics as envisaged by the Militant Group (and carried out by the fused organisation) a "light-minded attitude" typical of "Third Period Stalinism" and a "concession to the organisational incompatibility of the Bolshevik and Menshevik tendencies within the 4th International". It instructed the leadership of the new group "to direct the activities of the *entire* organisation in *all* its spheres in accordance with the L(about) P(arty) tactic", forcing all who were eligible to join, redirecting the campaign of its I.L.P. faction from affiliation to the Fourth International towards Labour Party affiliation, and directing its industrial work towards the Labour Party also. For:

"The aim of the Entrism Tactic is that of the United Front Tactic - the method of procedure is the same, i.e. the exposure of reformism in joint activity with Social Democratic workers, by "counterposing revolutionary aims to reformist aims, revolutionary methods to reformist methods of struggle, and revolutionary leadership to reformist leadership".⁶⁸

The W.I.L./T.O. resolution on entrism was proposed by Jock Haston and

seconded for the T.O. by that veteran opponent of the Tactic, Arthur Cooper. It defined entrism as a question "of tactics and not of principle", and though the masses would again turn to Labour and make it "a mass organisation", many were at present leaving it, whilst the ILP, CP and others were growing. In the I.L.P.'s case, in the event of a break in the coalition, it would almost certainly turn back to the Labour Party, forming in it a left pole of attraction superior to that of the Trotskyists - who in any case were already in the I.L.P. As far as the Communists and unorganised youth and women were concerned, they "can and must be won to the open banner of the Fourth International" by "raising the independent banner of the Fourth International" in the main field of work - the industrial front. The resolution ended by calling on conference "to build the independent party of the British Working class".⁶⁹ The motions of the Militant Group and the Left were both heavily defeated, and again the W.I.L./T.O. proposal went through with eleven votes against, though events were soon to prove that they would have been far wiser to have accepted either of the other resolutions.⁷⁰

Discussion turned now to industrial policy, and Tearse moved the W.I.L. resolution of support to the Militant Workers Federation, as a stage in the formation of a nationwide factory leadership to co-ordinate and direct militant industrial activity - not only at plant level, but in the unions as a whole. It expressed the hope that it would become a focal point around which workers could organise at both local and national level when the industrial storms broke out in full force towards the War's end. The only opposition to this perspective came from the Left. Their resolution, moved by Gibbie Russell, stated that industrial work for revolutionaries was political work, and must be carried out "in conformity with the Labour Party Tactic". The Clyde Workers' Committee and the Militant Workers' Federation should be dropped, as "artificial paper" organisations with no support from the overwhelming mass of workers, and activity should take place instead inside the existing shop stewards movement - whether Stalinist or otherwise. Trying to build another movement was an "evasion of the struggle".⁷¹ But the only votes for the Left were those of their own delegates: the W.I.L. policy was carried with only Left votes cast against.⁷²

Last of all Grant asked for the adoption of the W.I.L. perspectives document *The World Revolution and the Tasks of the Working Class*, previously accepted by the W.I.L. Conference of October 1943 and printed as a pamphlet. It described the collapse of the hopes of the Axis powers, and Britain's status as an American satellite; repeated Trotsky's analysis of the U.S.S.R., and the likely fall of Stalinism either to workers' revolution or bourgeois counter-revolution; looked to the revolution of the workers and peasants in India and the Far East; and reiterated the slogan of the United Socialist States of Europe.⁷³ Again, only the Left were opposed.⁷⁴

Central Committee elections took place on the panel system. Twelve former members of the W.I.L., Denzil Harber and John Archer from the

Militant Group, and John Lawrence from the Trotskyist Opposition were selected, as well as 5 alternates.

Healy's Minority was refused representation, as it claimed it had no political differences, and the Left refused to stand for office because they were unwilling to take any responsibility for the new grouping. The final wrangle surrounded the name of the proposed organisation. The Left view, given by Robinson, was adamantly opposed to using the word "party", and Davis and Wells, speaking for the Militant Group, thought that it invited adventurism and encouraged "sectarian opposition to the entrust tactic".⁷⁵ Ted Grant, Charlie Orwell and Jock Haston of W.I.L. and Arthur Cooper of T.O. all favoured it, and it was adopted against the votes of only eleven delegates. Finally, Cooper's proposal of "Revolutionary Socialist Party" was rejected in favour of Haston's "Revolutionary Communist Party". After ratifying the new constitution, all the factions, with the exception of the Left, announced their dissolution. As Arthur Cooper rose to make the statement on behalf of the Trotskyist Opposition, guffaws came from the corners of the hall.

And well they might. As an earlier W.I.L. statement put it, "only a fool or a rogue could be enthusiastic (unless they are completely blind to what the position is) about the prospect of introducing such sectarians and professional splitters into our organisation".⁷⁶ That same night Sherry Mangan called together a meeting of the supporters of Healy and Lawrence to organise the struggle against the "anti-International" majority leadership. Inside three months Sam Gordon had a report of the Conference circulating in the internal bulletin of the S.W.P. containing factual error and prejudiced reportage of "a deviation of national colouration" and a "danger of activism pure and simple". Speeches were taken out of context, including one from a much earlier conference, and otherwise distorted to give a misleading impression.⁷⁷ A round of angry protests followed.⁷⁸

A hundred thousand miners were on strike in the coalfields. Jock Haston, elected General Secretary by the Central Committee, moved into the W.I.L. offices at 256 Harrow Road. The 'Revolutionary Communist Party, British Section of the Fourth International' was in being.

Notes

1. 'Report on Negotiations with the W.I.L.', Internal Bulletin of the R.S.L., p.3; D.D.H(arber), 'On Infallibility Based on Dishonesty: J.L.R(obinson) and Democratic Centralism', Internal Document of the R.S.L., 31st January, 1943.
2. 'Resolution on the Unification of the British Section', in *Documents of the Fourth International; The Formative Years*, New York, 1973, p.359. The terms of this decision show that the I.S. was already out of touch. In describing the British Section as 'The Militant Labour

League' instead of the R.S.L. they were cutting across the appeal of the M.L.L. against the ban of the Labour Party; and even the Labour League of Youth was invited to join the British Section as an organisation 'claiming adherence to the ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky'.

3. 'An Open Letter to the Members of the W.I.L. from the C.C. of the B.S.F.I.', 15th December, 1940.
4. Letter of the W.I.L. to the R.S.L., 21st July, 1941, in 'Report on Negotiations with the W.I.L.', Internal Document of the R.S.L.
5. Letter of the W.I.L. to the R.S.L., 17th August, 1941, quoted in 'Report on Negotiations with the W.I.L.', Internal Document of the R.S.L., p.4.
6. Letter of the R.S.L. to the W.I.L., 27th August, 1941; op. cit., p.4.
7. 'Reply to the Political Statement of the Revolutionary Socialist League, 1941', Internal Bulletin of the W.I.L.
8. Letter of the R.S.L. to the W.I.L., 12th December, 1941; op. cit. n. 5 above, p.6.
9. E.C. Clapper (for the I.S.), Letter to the R.S.L., 21st June, 1942, in 'On Unification with the W.I.L.', Internal Document of the R.S.L., December 1942, Appendix, p.6.
10. Letter of the R.S.L. to the W.I.L., 9th July, 1942.
11. Ted Grant, Letter to the R.S.L., 29th July, 1942.
12. D.D.H(arber), Letter to W.I.L., 1st September, 1942.
13. E.S.J(ackson), Letter to D.D.H(arber)(undated, but after the Autumn of 1942 on internal evidence), C.f., p.42 above.
14. The first favourable references to the W.I.L. in S.W.P. literature appear in September 1941, and run on continuously, The *Militant* describes them as 'a British Trotskyist group' (6th September, 1941, 21st March, 1942) at the same time as the I.S. was assuring the W.I.L. that "the R.S.L. remains, of course, our representative in England. The decision of 1938 was not taken by chance, but on the basis of a quite definite attitude of the Lee Group". (Letter of the I.S. to the W.I.L., 28th October, 1941). But by 25th April the W.I.L. is being described as an 'affiliate of the Fourth International', with barely a mention of the official section. Accounts reproduced wholesale from *Socialist Appeal*, not only of news (e.g. the Betteshanger Strike 21st March, 1942), but even of programme (25th April, 1942). The last article lists the British Trotskyist press quite impartially as *Militant*, *Workers International News* and *Socialist Appeal*. *Fourth International* magazine in August, 1942 referred to W.I.L. as an organisation adhering to the programme of the Fourth International.
15. L. Lawrence, 'Class Struggles in Britain', in *The Militant*, vol. vi, no. 32, 8th August, 1942.
16. Minutes of the E.C. of the R.S.L., 21st November, 1942.
17. E.L.D(avis), Resolution of the C.C. of the R.S.L., 17th September, 1942.
18. C.f. the attitudes of Trotsky and Cannon to the split in the S.W.P. in 1940, compare *In Defence of Marxism* (the political issues) with *Struggle for a Proletarian Party* (the organisational question).
19. N. Trotsky, G. Munis, and B. Péret, 'The Fourth International in Danger', Internal Bulletin of the R.C.P., 27th June, 1947, p.7.
20. E.g. Grandizo Munis' Spanish Section, and some of the Latin American Sections.
21. Political Bureau of the W.I.L., 'Reply to Comrade Cooper; The Bolshevik Attitude to Unity..... and Splits', Internal Bulletin of the W.I.L., 11th September, 1943, p.6 (emphasis as in original).
22. H. R(atner), H. S(hindler), J. L(awrence) L.P.(?), 'The Labour Party Tactic', undated internal document of the R.S.L.
23. Report of John Lawrence, C.C. Minutes, R.S.L., 5th January, 1942.
24. R. C(arson), 'On Our Relations with the W.I.L.'. Internal Document of the R.S.L.
25. J.L(awrence), 'Letter to the R.S.L. Membership', 18th December, 1942, p.1; Documents on R.S.L./W.I.L. Relations, Internal Document of the W.I.L., p.13; 'Letter of the LI(Leeds)', Internal Document of the R.S.L.; Jock Haston, Interview with Al Richardson, 30th April, 1978: "Well, we won Lawrence over to us when he was still a member of the R.S.L., and we kept him in the R.S.L. with the object of trying to win other people over to

our point of view - it's as simple as that. It's a typical old entrust tactic - nothing new about it. The fact that we did it with other organisations didn't prevent us doing it with some of the other Trotskyist factions'.

26. 'History of Expulsions of Members of the W.I.L. Faction (Right Wing)', accepted by a Majority of the C.C. of the R.S.L., December, 1942, p.2.
27. Statement of R.C.(arson), J.L(awrence), M.F(allerman), H.L(ane), E.F(inch), D.F(inch), N.L(?), L.S(hindler), H.S(hindler), S.E.(?), J.A(lexander), L.G.(?), K.M.(Kemshead), J.E.G(offe), Internal Document of the R.S.L., 14th July, 1942.
28. 'Copy of a Letter from Stuart to J.L(awrence), 4th February, 1943, in Documents on R.S.L./W.I.L. Relations, Internal Document of W.I.L., p.15.
29. Op. cit., n. 26 above, p.2. C.f. p.1.
30. Op. cit., n. 28 above, p.17.
31. Statement of the Political Bureau on the Expulsion from the W.I.L. of G. Healy at the Central Committee Meeting of February 17th, 1943'; Statement of the Political Bureau, 15th February, 1943. C.f. 'The First Expulsion of G. Healy', in *The News Line*, 8th November, 1985, p.5.
32. C.f. above, pp. 9-11.
33. Op. cit., n. 31 above; Jock Haston, Interview with Al Richardson, 30th April, 1978.
34. Minutes of the Central Committee of the W.I.L., 7th November, 1942.
35. C.f. n. 31, above.
36. Letter from S.G. to D.D.H(arber), Internal Document of the R.S.L., 9th March, 1943.
37. Political Bureau of the W.I.L., 'Reply to Comrade Lou Cooper: the Bolshevik Attitude to Unity..... and Splits', Internal Bulletin of the W.I.L., 11th September, 1943.
38. G. Healy, 'Our Most Important Task', Internal Bulletin of W.I.L., 10th August, 1943, p.3.
39. The group did not actually include Joe Thomas, as is stated in M. Shaw, *Robert Shaw: Fighter For Trotskyism*, London, 1983, p.69.
40. G. Healy, 'Our Most Important Task', Internal Bulletin of the W.I.L., 10th August, 1943, pp. 2-8.
41. This was Lenin's attitude, that if the question of the Labour Party divided Communists the Comintern should opt for two separate parties if differences were irreconcilable - C.f. *The Second Congress of the Communist International*, London, 1977, vol. i, p.71.
42. Political Bureau of the W.I.L., 'Bolshevik Method and Revolutionary Sincerity', Internal Bulletin of the W.I.L., 2nd September, 1943, p.7.
43. H. P(ratt), 'Political Statement of the Minority on Unification', Internal Bulletin of the W.I.L., December, 1943, p.7.
44. It rankled on Healy for years afterwards. C.f. .G. Healy, 'Letter to the NYC Tendency Majority', 12th November, 1962, in *Marxist Bulletin*, no. 3, New York, 1968, pp. 18-9.
45. Op. cit., n. 43 above, especially pp. 5-7.
46. 'Report of the C.C. of the W.I.L. on its Sessions of 15th and 16th January, 1944'.
47. D.D.H(arber), 'Letter to C.O(rwell)', Internal Document of the R.S.L., 2nd December, 1943. C.f. n. 46 above for a similar report.
48. Resolution of the International Secretariat, 26th September, 1943.
49. Minutes of the E.C. of the R.S.L., 18th September, 1943. D.D.H(arber), Letter to the 'Right' and 'Left' Factions, 10th November, 1943.
50. 'Reply to the C.C. by the Left', Internal Document of the R.S.L. (undated), p.3.
51. *The Leninist* (Internal Bulletin of the Left in the R.S.L.), no. 1, April, 1942, 2; Marc Loris (Jean Van Heijenoort), Letter of 15th July, 1943; Letter of the Left, 25th September, 1943.
52. 'Brief Notes on the History of the Left Fraction', p.2.
53. The 'Left Fraction Report of the R.S.L. Reconstitution Conference, 1st January, 1944', gives the voting strengths as Centre 36, Right 34 and Left 29, with 103 votes to be cast altogether. This does not entirely agree with Harber's account in 'Confidential - For Militant Group Members Only', 1st January, 1944, which puts the vote of his own faction at 40.
54. Trotskyist Opposition, 'Reconstitution Conference Resolution on Fusion Proposals', 12th December, 1943.

55. 'Resolution on Fusion with the W.I.L. to be submitted by the Militant Group (R.S.L.) to the 'Reconstitution Conference', of the R.S.L.', p.2; D.D.H(arber), 'Account of an Interview between S.G. and D.D.H(arber) (Militant Group) and J.L(awrence) (T.O.) on 4th December, 1943, p.2. 8th December.
56. Minutes of the R.S.L. Reconstitution Conference, 1st January, 1944.
57. Left Fraction Report of the Reconstitution Conference, 1st January, 1944.
58. Central Committee Report of the W.I.L., 15th and 16th January, 1944.
59. Minutes, Joint Delegate Meeting, 21st January, 1944.
60. C.f. the details given in W.I.L.'s circular 'For Members Only'.
61. D.D.H(arber), 'Confidential - for Militant Group Members Only', 1st January, 1944, p.1. C.f. Documents on R.S.L./W.I.L. relations (undated, but written in the summer of 1943) p.18; 'When the T.O. eventually does fuse with the W.I.L., they will maintain their faction within W.I.L. as the 'true' Fourth Internationalists. In other words, instead of liquidating the factions after the fusion, the T.O. is discussing the maintenance of the split within the ranks of the fused organisation, yet it has no avowed political differences. This is a false and unprincipled conception of unification and lays the basis for a future split'. This was also the impression formed by Bert Atkinson when present at a T.O. meeting being addressed by Mangan - Bert Atkinson, Interview with Al Richardson and Sam Bornstein, 4th November, 1977.
62. C.f. The Left, 'The Fusion Arrangements: A Letter to the Membership of the R.S.L. and W.I.L.'. The Joint Committee had, in fact, circulated the Left's Italian pamphlet and resolutions as part of the preconference discussion, but in view of the Left's refusal to accept the Conference's authority, they were not to be voted on.
63. 'Military Policy: W.I.L. and T.O. Resolution'.
64. 'On National Defence', in 'Resolutions Submitted by the Militant Group', pp. 19-20.
65. Left Fraction, 'Attitude of the Proletariat Towards Imperialist War'.
66. 'Report of Fusion Conference of R.S.L. and W.I.L. held on 11th and 12th March, 1944', p.2.
67. 'On the Labour Party Tactic' in 'Resolutions Submitted by the Militant Group'. pp. 9-19.
68. Left Fraction, 'Resolution on the Labour Party Tactic'.
69. 'R.S.L.-W.I.L. Fusion Conference 1944: Resolution on the Entrist Tactic Submitted by W.I.L.'.
70. C.f. Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back*, London, 1982, pp. 119-20. 130, 135-6, etc.
71. Left Fraction, 'Resolution on Industrial Work'.
72. 'Report of Fusion Conference of R.S.L. and W.I.L. held on 11th and 12th March, 1944', p.2.
73. *The World Revolution and the Tasks of the British Working Class*, W.I.L. pamphlet, pp. 3-12.
74. Op. cit., n. 72 above, ibid.
75. 'Resolutions Submitted by the Militant Group', 'On the Name of the Fused Organisation', p.21.
76. Political Bureau of the W.I.L., 'Bolshevik Method and Revolutionary Sincerity: A Reply to Healy', *Internal Bulletin* of the W.I.L., 2nd September, 1943.
77. 'J.B. Stuart', 'The Fusion of the British Trotskyists; the Attack Against the New Party; Immediate Perspectives and Tasks', *Internal Bulletin* of the S.W.P., vol. iii, June, 1944.
78. M. Lee, Letter of 26th July, 1944; J. Haston, Letter of 4th October; etc. C.f. *Internal Bulletin* of the S.W.P., vol. vii, no. 3, April, 1945.

Chapter Five

Jail And Missed Opportunity: The Revolutionary Communist Party, 1944 - 1945

The Spring of 1944, before the preparation and opening up of the Second Front in the West was an especially difficult time for the Government on the 'Home Front'. In South Wales 100,000 miners were out on strike over the 'Porter Award', and in Yorkshire 80,000 more.¹ By April, 50,000 munitions, aircraft and shipyards men were out as well.² The government feared a major delay in its plans for the Normandy landings. As Arthur Horner, hard at work stopping the Welsh strike, was later to admit:

"Many delegates were confused in April, 1944, when widespread strikes broke out in various parts of the country. And I am certain that there were misgivings among the delegates as to whether the leadership of the Party was correct in the attitude we adopted. Now let me tell you this for the first time. When these strikes were going on, many of us were aware that the Second Front was being prepared, and these strikes, had they continued, would have prevented the launching of the Second Front. The Sheffield works were almost stopped - we were bringing coal from Durham into Yorkshire to produce the armaments essential to the launching of D-day. Of course, we could not tell the country that. To tell the country would have been to tell the enemy..... I suggest to this congress³ that on future occasions it might not be possible to inform all the members of the desire of the leadership to serve greater purposes than even the interests of a section of the working class, and you must from this experience learn to have faith in the leadership of the Party, which under the most difficult circumstances faced unpopularity and misunderstanding in the interests of a greater cause".⁴

At the same time the Government's need for the flexibility of labour compounded the crisis. Now that the U.S.A. had come into the War, its immense economy of scale could easily outproduce Britain's engineering industry, and lay-offs began to return to it. At the same time the coal

industry was suffering from an acute lack of man-power and a drastic drop in productivity.⁵ Workers had to be transferred from engineering, where wages were comparatively high, to mining, where they were unbelievably low. As apprentices were not very well organised, and were presumed docile, they were chosen. Apart from being wrenched from their homes and sent all over the country, they had their apprenticeships broken, and learned, in effect, that their skills were no longer needed. The proposed 'Bevin Ballot Scheme' passed into law on December 2nd 1943.

Late in December 1943 a small group of apprentices met in Newcastle and formed the Tyne Apprentices' Guild. Its Secretary was an ex-member of the Y.C.L., Bill Davy. Contact was established with those members of W.I.L. who were still working in the I.L.P. As Jack Rawlings recalls:

"Well, most of the apprentices weren't politically motivated in any way at all. But living and working in a mining area they learned to hate the bloody thing. They knew what their relatives and friends had gone through, and the conditions of work, and the low standard of living, and so on. As they were "pit props" of the trade, and here they were being faced with the compulsory working down the mine, and they didn't know for how long their apprenticeship was going to be interrupted. And frankly, a lot of the lads would rather have gone into the army or the air forces. I should think their chance of survival in the air force was greater than down the pit. Probably that was the way they looked at it. So when the order, the Bevin Scheme, became a law, then a lot of apprentices started talking together, and talked of opposing it. In all the factories it was spontaneous, and then suddenly they linked up, and decided to hold a public meeting somewhere in Newcastle. But they didn't know where they could get a meeting, and it was agreed that they should meet at Gray's Monument, and go on from there and try to find a place.

One or two I.L.P.ers, on the way to the Arcade, passed Gray's Monument, and asked what all the fuss was about in the blackout, learned from these kids what they wanted, and took them down to the Arcade, where they could have a meeting - and as good as they could have one in a pub, or as they could have one in a café. It was a political club, so they hoped they could enjoy themselves and listen and discuss with these kids.

I don't know whether they were directed, but one of them asked to see the Committee of the I.L.P. We were having a meeting in a room, so we just suspended the meeting and asked them in. It was young Bill Davy, and he wanted to know whether the I.L.P. would assist them in publicity for their case, and so on. So Dan Smith and Ken Skethaway, and I think Johnston, were sitting at the table, and they had quite a bit of discussion. It was decided that they should also have a discussion with Heaton Lee and Ann Keen, who were distributing the *Socialist*

Appeal. But, of course, we were all very close, we were members of the W.I.L. or close sympathisers. They went along to Walker, and we took them along, and we had a long discussion about the prospects of a strike, the sympathies which they might get from the workers - or they might not get - and we really told them that at that particular moment the strike would not be very popular with most of the workers, and they couldn't expect very much sympathy.

But they weren't going to go down the pit and they were opposing this Ballot Scheme, so of course the I.L.P. and the W.I.L. agreed to give them publicity. Of course, we had many talks just before the strike and during the strike. The kids were really determined to have the strike, and it was really heartening to see the kids, the way they stood out (with) no political views - just one or two. Bill Davy had been a member of the Communist Party - or Y.C.L. rather, but had no political views. But they were determined. They weren't going to be pushed around, but they held out".⁶

Ann Keen and Heaton Lee in turn sent for Roy Tearse, who was able to put his organising ability and contacts in the Militant Workers' Federation at their disposal:

"But once having made contact as secretary of the Militant Workers' Federation, this meant an important link was being established. For instance, I was invited to speak to meetings of apprentices in Sunderland and elsewhere, and so the Militant Workers' Federation fairly rapidly had a considerable influence. What we were able to do as well was that the apprentices on the Clydeside, with whom we were in contact at the same time, we put in touch with the Tyneside people. Also there were people in Huddersfield and elsewhere. So the Militant Workers' Federation really had some effect in connecting these people together".⁷

Tearse explained that it was likely that the strike was going to be defeated, as they were taking on the Government, but the apprentices were adamant. But he was able to advise them of a way out of their isolation, so that they would not meet a wall of hostility from the public in general, or the miners in particular. The basic problem was that they had been on higher rates of pay, and were felt to be aloof from the miners by the skills and better conditions they had enjoyed. Accordingly, Tearse helped them to frame their appeal in terms of the discontent of the colliers at the same time:

"The Government has consistently refused to nationalise the mines in order to solve the coal crisis. They place the entire responsibility for the breakdown in coal production on the miners, whereas it is the result of private ownership of the mines and the inefficient and chaotic capitalist control and organisation which is to blame.

In order to solve the crisis they have, at every turn, thrown the

burden of increasing production on the backs of you, our brother miners.....

The miners of Britain have shown the Government that they will not tolerate these reactionary methods. The recent miners' strikes provide evidence of this. Now they are trying to solve the problem by forcing young workers down the mine, but we also will resist.

Brothers! Miners! You know better than any other section of the working class, that the coal crisis will not be solved in this fashion. Coal owners are responsible for the coal crisis. Only by nationalising the mines and operating them under workers control can the crisis be solved.

We need your support in our struggles against the 'BEVIN BALLOT SCHEME'. We will support you in your demand for nationalisation of the mines and their operation under workers control".⁸

Another leaflet addressed to the broad trade union movement countered in advance the "false prophets" of the Communist Party who say that it was "necessary to make further sacrifices for the defeat of Fascism", by declaring that "sacrifices from the bosses are long overdue", in the shape of nationalisation and the acceptance of the miners' wage demands.⁹

This enabled the apprentices to take their case into the wider movement, call for solidarity and take up collections, and even argue their case with the miners themselves. "There was hostility from among the miners", explained Tearse, "the miners' reaction was that those snotty-nosed apprentices didn't want to dirty themselves by going down the pits. But then the apprentices argued subsequently (really as a result of the Trotskyist influence) that they weren't opposed to going down the pits, but that they were for the nationalisation of the mines, and if this was carried out and some sort of workers' control was established, they would willingly go down the pits".¹⁰

In fact, without this Trotskyist guidance, the apprentices' movement would never have got off the ground in the first place. The policy adopted by the Communist Party to isolate, split and demoralise the apprentices was to call for ex-miners to be rooted out of their present employment and directed down the pit instead,¹¹ and right at the formation of the guild two Y.C.L.'ers, Stubbins and Johnstone, had tried to get this adopted as its policy. But Davy, "standing for unity with miners, ex-miners and trade unionists", exposed them and forced them to leave. Angered at this attempt at interference, the committee became "openly hostile to political intervention".¹² Later on a Y.C.L.'er called Donnachie from Blyth was elected onto the committee, and got a temporary majority for the same line. Heaton Lee then managed to get the Sunderland Apprentices to pass a resolution supporting the striking Lancashire miners with only 3 votes against, and after a further such meeting, addressed by Roy Tearse, Donnachie left the Guild a few days later.

Beaten in the open unofficial meetings, the Stalinists now resorted to the union machinery at their command. In the middle of March 1944 the A.E.U. District Committee set up again the long defunct 'Junior Male Workers' Committee', an official Union body, and a few days later the Organiser, Mitchell, and Hepple from the D.C. told the apprentices to sever their connection with the Tyne Apprentices Guild or face expulsion from the A.E.U. Davy then joined the J.W.C. in order to argue against the Secretary, Kennedy, who of course opposed the strike.¹³

Considerable assistance was rendered in a more direct way. Heaton Lee helped Davy to draft a letter to Ernest Bevin giving him three weeks' notice of the strike to which Bevin did not reply,¹⁴ and Haston drafted the text of some of their leaflets and advised the boys about lobbying M.P.'s when they came to London. Ann Keen had typed and duplicated their letters and propaganda leaflets. But the main service was rendered by Roy Tearse, who advised the apprentices on the organisation of the strike - that they should set up committees for Picketing, Flying Squad, Finance, Social, Hardship and Propaganda.¹⁵ On March 28th, with no signal that the authorities had even noticed them, the apprentices came out in defence of one of their brothers, and the movement spread from the Tyne to the Wear, and into Clydeside and Huddersfield.¹⁶ It was over a fortnight before the authorities could get the last of the boys back to work.

The fact that the unofficial miners' strikes were not yet under control was worrying the Trade Union leaders. Joe Hall, whose hands were full trying to get 80,000 Yorkshire miners back to work, complained that "if the Bevin boys are allowed to walk out whenever they feel inclined, you can hardly blame our lads for doing the same. It is time the situation was handled firmly".¹⁷ On April 5th the General Council of the T.U.C. adopted a statement describing the strike wave as "a blow struck in the back of their comrades in the forces who are now steeling themselves for the life-and-death-struggle on the European Continent in the opening of the great offensive in the West", and warning against "persons and organisations that have been fomenting disturbances" in order to "obstruct the industrial war effort and destroy the unity of the nation at the most critical phase of the War".¹⁸

On the 5th and 6th April police raids began upon the offices of the Revolutionary Communist Party in London, and houses there and in Nottingham, Glasgow, Wallsend and Newcastle, and a spate of letter opening and phone-tapping began. As Ann Keen recalls:

"The idea was to get these leaflets going and ask the trade unions for help, and as a result of them doing this - (it was this really, I think that alerted the police) I discovered that letters were being opened. I was told that letters had been opened that came by sympathetic postmen, that our stuff had been looked at before it came in, and I believe that before the actual arrests took place that raids took place in London and other places.....

I remember making a phone call to London. In fact, I think I had to go and make a call to London when I was on my own. I suppose (I

was told that I would just have to carry on my own as best I can, and I came back feeling very scared about the whole thing, because it was the first time..... I felt they were relying on me. I felt there were other people with me, but this time I had to really get down to things on my own, however it was. I did the right thing, at any rate.

I suppose shortly after that the police came in and raided us. I think they said at the time that we were an unusually tidy lot, and unlike all the other places they said they had raided, they were able to lay their hands on things quite easily. As a result of this they took away a lot of stuff. But they didn't take the duplicator. There was a duplicating machine and other things that they didn't take away, and it struck us very odd at the time..... We had a little room that was given completely to all the literature and everything, all laid out in neat little piles, so totally different to anything that they found in the other places that they raided".¹⁹

In the atmosphere of alarm in government circles Herbert Morrison drew up a report at short notice and placed it before the Cabinet to reassure it that the R.C.P. had little chance of turning the disputes in the coalfields into a political challenge to the Government. The report was quite accurate, but not entirely so. It was most at fault in the political analysis supplied by Morrison himself from his reading of Stalinist and Trotskyist literature. For example, it misstates the theory of 'Permanent Revolution' as a belief in the necessity for "more or less simultaneous revolution over the greater part of the globe," and wrongly places the date of the foundation of the movement in this country in 1929. But the report proves to be exceptionally accurate about the London membership figures of the R.C.P., and fairly accurate on the W.I.L.'s income and press circulation previously, whilst being surprisingly vague on the total national membership of the R.C.P. It was put together from a limited number of sources of varying worth, ranging from a reading of W.I.L. and R.C.P. literature and a police report from a local Yorkshire miners' meeting to an informer, placed on the Central Committee of the W.I.L. and then the R.C.P.²⁰

First to be arrested were Heaton Lee and Ann Keen, at 2 a.m. on April 8th, in their flat in Elgin Gardens, Newcastle.²¹ As Ann Keen recalls:

"Then I suppose a few days took place when we were interviewed, and were almost 'grilled'. Not having slept, really, for the first time for two or three nights, finally for the first time we fell asleep, only to be woken up at 2 o'clock in the morning with a terrific banging and ringing, and so on. As far as I can remember three or four police arrived with two cars. Three, I think, came in, including a woman (because of me) and we got up and let them in and got dressed. I was recovering from a rather severe dose of measles, and was not at all well. So I thought that if I was going to spend an uncomfortable time I'd get some trousers..... We were even followed when we had to go

to the lavatory. We were followed to the lavatory! (We were) taken down to Newcastle. The dog (we had a dog at the time) - he was also taken, put downstairs somewhere, and the poor dog was moaning and crying all night long. He must have been very close to where I was myself, because he seemed to be directly down below. I was more concerned really about the dog than anything else. The next morning I was in a very untidy state. I wanted to have a comb or something, and was told this was not permitted. But then what happened was rather a miracle. It seems that one of the houses we had been going to in this mining village always took two papers, and we gathered that one of them was being taken for the daughter of the house. She turned out to be one of the wardresses in the prison, and from then on it was slow moving. She acted now as the go-between, giving me all the information that came up from time to time. It was through her that I learned that they were attempting to deport Heaton Lee back to South Africa, and they were also hoping to do the same to me. But they couldn't very easily, because I was British by birth, but they were hoping to do it. This helped me enormously, because forewarned was forearmed, and we were able to pass this to the solicitors so they knew what we were going to be up against in the future.....

I was then remanded in custody for three weeks, and before being transferred to the Black Maria and then down to Durham Gaol we were fingerprinted and photographed. At that stage I felt so bad in myself I appeared to break down, and this wardress came in and said "Can I help in any way?" I said "Yes - the one thing I want to do is to get a message out to people and let them know where we are and what has happened", and she said "Right", and she gave me some paper, and she smuggled out a letter. I've forgotten who it went to, but at any rate it went out".²²

The same technique of arrest was applied to Roy Tearse at his flat in Queen's Drive, Glasgow, early in the morning on April 11th. After "barely a minute" in the Glasgow Central Police Court he was sent to Newcastle and committed to prison for four days' examination.²³

For some time they failed to lay hands on Jock Haston. The day after the T.U.C. issued their statement Haston released his own to the British Press Association. "If the Government imagines that by closing us down and suppressing our publication they are going to stop the wave of strikes, they are mad" he observed. But "if the Government nationalised the mines and operated them under committees of workers and technicians, they would settle the problem in twenty-four hours".²⁴ It was not until April 26th that Haston walked into the C.I.D. Headquarters in Edinburgh and gave himself up.²⁵

Charges had not originally been preferred against him. As part of their evidence the Newcastle police had "grilled, threatened and cajoled" Bill

Davy for a day without cautioning him, keeping him in the police station for seven hours continuous questioning until he "volunteered" a statement.²⁶ Immediately Haston moved in to try to repair the damage:

"I went up to Tyneside, and I found out what had happened - that the apprentices had been pressurised into making statements. I got them to call a press conference, and to say that these statements had been made under duress, and they wanted to withdraw these statements. As a consequence of that, the Yard decided that they would arrest me.

I was in Edinburgh at the time. I was on a lecture tour in different parts of the country, organising a lecture tour. They came to my mother's house which I had been in only a short time before, and when I returned my mother told me the police had been there. I rang up the local police station that afternoon and said "I understand that you are looking for me", and they said "Yes", and I said "Well, what are you looking for me for?". They said "About the Tyneside Apprentices' Strike". My response to that was, "Well, look, I'm not a very well man, I'm suffering from ulcers. I don't want to be arrested in Edinburgh, and then spend the night in Edinburgh Gaol, and then be brought down to Newcastle and go over the process there. With their agreement I'll make my way down to Newcastle - they could do so". They said, "Well, we don't make agreements like that in the police service", and I said that in that case I would come in later when it suited my purpose. Then I took my kids out for the afternoon and I went to a show in the evening. At about 10 o'clock that night I walked into the Edinburgh police station and said "I understand that you are looking for me - my name's James Haston". I discovered that practically the whole of the police force were out trying to pick me up, and they didn't want me to walk in. They had this big scare going about "these dangerous people". They wanted to arrest me, and when eventually they called the officers in from outside it took them about an hour to get them in. It was nearly midnight, it was!

I had told the press, by the way, that I was going to hand myself in, so there was a big press posse there in waiting. But when they charged me with conspiring to "aiding and abetting and furthering an illegal strike" I wrote my answer, and my answer was that it was a frame-up, that it was part of a conspiracy on the part of the Government. I was charged the following day in Edinburgh Court, and then brought to Newcastle".²⁷

The formal charges lodged with the magistrates in Newcastle on April 28th were that "they did conspire, combine, confederate and agree together with other persons to act in furtherance of a strike declared by the Trades Disputes Act of 1927 to be illegal". Haston replied denying the charges, declaring them to be a frame-up and claiming that "the conspiracy would

appear to come from the top and the trial appeared to be a case of political victimisation". Although by then Heaton Lee and Ann Keen had been in gaol for three weeks the magistrates denied bail, and fixed the trial for the 18th or 19th May. Only application to a judge in chambers the next day secured their release - in the case of Heaton Lee and Ann Keen immediately, and in that of the others on the following Tuesday, on condition that they reported to their local police station twice a day.²⁸

As the Trotskyists listened to the reading of the charges, a major furore was brewing. For some weeks the press had been buzzing with rumours that "drastic action" was to be taken against "professional agitators". On April 3rd the *Daily Mail* announced that the "Cabinet May Move Against Strikes", and on that very day the War Cabinet was poring over evidence that "the Apprentices' Strike on Tyneside, the Clyde and in Yorkshire was a political one and had been instigated by a group which had broken away from the Communist Party when Russia became our ally",²⁹ with the result that two days later Bevin announced to the Cabinet that "there was definite evidence that members of a political organisation were fomenting trouble, especially in the Sheffield area".³⁰ Accordingly, on April 17th, Bevin issued an order in Council, Regulation 1A(a) which made it an offence liable to a fine of £500 and five years' imprisonment to strike in essential services, or to have supported those who struck, and even for complaints outside the official trade union machinery. It was not only a direct challenge to the Shop Stewards' Movement, which as an unofficial grouping could now have its deliberations liable to prosecution, but even to those exercising the right of free speech in the streets. "It will no longer be a defence for a person to plead that he was doing nothing more than peacefully persuade other persons to take part in a strike" commented the Labour Co-ordinating Committee.³¹

Contrary to the elementary propositions of English Law, it was even admitted that the Regulation was to have retrospective force, that it would make acts criminal undertaken in the past, that were not even illegal at that time. For the police were already combing through the documents seized from the Trotskyists "for evidence that might be used when the new Order, making it a penal offence to incite unrest in industry, comes into force next week".³²

Although the new Regulation was an order in Council, and therefore need not be debated in Parliament, even though Bevin had it all prepared before Parliament went into recess at Easter, it was timed to come into force on the day before Parliament actually resumed. So on April 28th Aneurin Bevan put down a prayer to annul the Regulation, and angry scenes ensued. Commenting upon the "peculiarly vicious" way of issuing the order, he described it as "an abuse of the Government's position", an "affront to Parliament", going "behind our back" to "make laws in our absence". "Are we seriously asked to believe" he demanded, "that the stolid Yorkshire miners came out on strike because of a number of evilly-disposed

Trotskyists?" Describing the press intervention as a "carefully prepared campaign" to make acceptable to public opinion the use of 1A(a) against the trade unions, he turned to the case of the Trotskyists:

"The other day a number of so-called Trotskyists were arrested. The Right Hon. Gentleman, the Home Secretary might look up what he was being called in the last war - also the Right Hon. Gentleman, the Minister of Labour. The language, or its content, remains the same; the individuals differ. These poor people were imprisoned in Newcastle, kept on remand for 21 days, and then tried in camera, and the explanation was given that they were tried in camera because the police had not completed their investigations against other alleged offenders".

Mr. Stokes (Lab. Ipswich): "The Gestapo!"

A. Bevan: "These poor people had none of the benefits of any democratic code, and at the moment when they were in prison, before they had been tried, the newspapers were permitted, without any action being taken against them at all, to commit contempt of court, to an extent which had never before been seen in Great Britain. They piled up public hatred, they vented indignation and they slandered and abused these people at the very moment when they were being committed for trial. No action was taken by this venal government to protect them in any way. The whole thing is disgraceful, and shows the extent to which public morale has degenerated under the leadership we have at the present time".³³

Now, he continued, under 1A(a), 14-year-old boys could be sent to the coal-face and given 5 years' penal servitude if they refused. "It might be said that this will not be done", he warned, "but there never yet was a law so bad, that a bad judge could not be found to carry it out". Further:

"I have had telegrams from shop stewards' committees all over the country expressing alarm about this. Is the Right Hon. Gentleman going to operate the order against them? If he does, he will create more strikes than the Trotskyists have been able to do in five years of war..... The worker has his hands tied behind his back but the employer is perfectly free....."

He went on to deal with the complicity of the Labour leaders in all this. He revealed how "the big bosses at the top" of the Labour Party had threatened him with suspension again if he went ahead with his challenge, describing the Regulation as "defending the trade union official who has arterio-sclerosis", who was "so unpopular among his own membership that the only way he can keep them in order is to threaten them with 5 years in gaol". Moreover, it was useless trying to defend the Regulation by describing it as necessary to the morale of the army: "If the Right Hon. Gentleman thinks

that he has the support of the Armed Forces, then he does not know the mood of the Armed Forces”.

David Kirkwood, seconding, referred to 20 telegrams of protest sent from marine engineering centres in particular, and confronted Bevin himself:

“I am satisfied that a proper man, with courage, would go and face the workers. I have asked the Minister time and time again but he has said, ‘No, I am not going’. I asked him to go to the Tyne, but he said, ‘No’. I said, ‘You can take it from me that they will strike’. He said, ‘Let them strike. If they want a showdown, we are ready for them’. Who I ask, are ‘we’? Ready for whom? What a disgrace!”

Now it was the turn of John McGovern, for the I.L.P.:

“I saw the agitation that was carried on in the *Daily Mail*, practically alleging that these strikes were the result of some deep rooted Trotskyist plot, and that some young lady - a blonde in corduroy trousers - has been assisting in bringing the workers out on strike..... Does anybody suggest that 100,000 miners were on strike because of some Trotskyist plots? I have never heard anybody allege that. At the beginning of this war, there were shop stewards belonging to the Communist Party in almost every shop, and it became a byword that Communist leaders used to say: “What can we have a strike about today, boys?” The motto then was, “A Strike at Any Cost”, whether it was justified or not.

That phrase has passed away. Communists who were then calling the members of the party to which I belong “yellow”..... have altered their attitude..... now..... Communists do not call us “yellow”, but “Fascist”.

The M.P. for Marylebone was most angry at the erosion of democracy involved in the Government’s issuing regulations and then expecting Parliament to rubber stamp them. “The extremists in this country, the Trotskyists and anybody like that, are delighted”, he claimed, as “they are only too anxious that our form of democracy should be discredited”.

But the longest speech of all after Bevan’s was that from D.N. Pritt, who was anxious to blame the Government for not arresting the Trotskyists sooner, and for not taking sterner measures against them from laws that were already on the statute book:

“It will be remembered that the whole of this regulation is said to have passed because of Trotskyist instigation but, for the moment, all I want to deal with is the law relating to strikes. I do not think I am stating it too high when I say that the present legal position is that it is impossible for any strikes to be legal..... the Government advance the difficulties of Trotskyite instigation. I do not belittle Trotskyite instigation in the least. The only person foolish enough to do that is

the Home Secretary, with whom I will deal in a moment. What is the legal position about Trotskyite instigation of a strike? It is said that this vast piece of machinery directed against the whole mass of the working-class is necessary because Trotskyists have been instigating strikes, the inference being that if we did not have this new Regulation, we could not hit the Trotskyites.....

There are two other methods which the Home Secretary mentioned. There is 2D, which closes down a newspaper, and 18B, which puts them away.....

I do not minimise the Trotskyist instigation; I think it is serious, and I think it has grown up partly because of the refusal of the Home Secretary to do anything about it. The Home Secretary has two fiddles to play”.

E. Bevin: “The Hon. and learned member wants 18B?”

D.N. Pritt: “Not only 18B and also 2D. The Government, instead of supplying paper for *Socialist Appeal* should stop the paper itself.....”
 “..... the Government have now discovered, what a lot of people have been telling them for a long time, that the Trotskyists are sufficiently dangerous to be taken seriously..... Now what is the position? Your Trotskyist persuades people to strike. You can hit him with instigation; you can hit him under 1305 for taking part in an illegal strike.....”.

Bevin could hardly believe his ears. Here was Pritt, arguing against 1A(a) on the grounds that existing laws, if used harshly enough, could commit all the Trotskyists to jail without the necessity of any trial, and that their political activity could be halted completely by banning their newspaper.

But first Arthur Greenwood rose to defend the Government:

“We have had young, immature, irresponsible boys striking on political issues, on the question of the ballot for the mines settled by this House. There has been trouble promoted by men whose names we do not know, trouble promoted by men who will not carry the responsibility for that trouble, trouble created at a very, very difficult time in the progress of the War”.

Bevin was so nonplussed by Pritt’s argument, that he turned to the Communist Party’s previous record to support his Regulation, to Pritt’s evident embarrassment. Speaking of Stalinist policy in 1940 he pointed out:

“When we had at that very moment practically the whole work for the Navy in danger of closing down in Sheffield..... would the Hon. and learned member for North Hammersmith (Pritt) get up and argue a long treatise and legal definitions as he has done today? Not on your life, he would not. He would have done as they have done in Russia..... I did consider this Regulation a long time ago. I thought it would become inevitable. That was when this war was called an

imperialist war, and I was getting strikes all up and down the country, without provocation, and by design”.

An Hon. Member: “Were they Trotskyist?”

E. Bevin: “No, they were a majority, who suddenly decided that this war was not an imperialist war. The Trotskyists were the ‘Wee Frees’, who did not accept that”.

A notable contribution against the regulation came from Neil Maclean, M.P. for Govan:

“The Minister told us today that there were certain instigators going around promoting dissatisfaction in the country and organising strikes. Surely, if that is the actual fact we should have heard of a greater number of arrests of people engaged in these nefarious practices. As a matter of fact, we have only heard of four individuals - three men and one woman - being arrested.

Is this particular Regulation supposed to be a legitimising of the arrest of these four people, giving the judge power to send them to prison for five years, and how many more are going to be arrested? If there were only four I think the House will be paying a very heavy price for the punishment of four individuals who were arrested before the regulation was laid on the Table and were tried *in camera*”.

Describing such a way of introducing legislation as “the beginning of Fascism in this country”, he added that “all you need now is to put into the Regulation, authority for a judge to transport people overseas to penal settlements, and we shall be back in the days of the Tolpuddle Martyrs”.

S.O. Davies (Labour, Merthyr) tried to emphasise how the Order - already christened “Bevin’s Penal Servitude Regulation” - was bringing discredit upon the Labour Party, but Sir Richard Acland of Common Wealth provided the public with its first description of the Trotskyists on parliamentary record:

“It amused me to see the Hon and learned member for North Hammersmith (Pritt) join the minister in playing up the importance of this Trotskyist organisation. May I give a few facts about this organisation, which are, as far as I can make them, accurate - there may be ten percent error, but no more. The membership of this organisation is 500 - in a country of forty million people. The circulation of its paper, which only appears every other week, is a bare 5000. The total expenses of its head office, including wages is £10 a week. This is the size of the organisation which, it is suggested, can bring 130,000 miners out on strike”.

Before Gallacher could rise to defend Pritt, for being to the right of the Government, the motion was put, with 23 M.P.s voting against the Regulation and another 145 abstaining - in all, amounting to a third of the Labour members in the House.

Through the debate, in which frequent reference was made to the

contempt of court committed by the newspapers against the Trotskyists, and in which Pritt tried to provide the Prosecution with more serious charges against them, the Attorney General sat silent.³⁴ For, in fact, a goodly proportion of the mountain of slander to which Bevan drew attention came from the propaganda organs of the Communist Party. To begin with, the Party had accepted 1A(a), and only after a storm of protest arose in the labour movement did it switch to opposition, arguing that existing legislation was enough.³⁵ But it did ask the Government to "make its contribution to the creation of a new atmosphere in the mining industry" by refusing to tolerate "the Trotskyists who seek to inflame every dispute into a strike". "Let the Government deal with these saboteurs with a strong hand" ran a *Daily Worker* editorial.³⁶ An 'Education Leaflet' emanating from Marx House in Clerkenwell issued a similar call to "expose and root out every Trotskyist, to hound them out of Labour and Progressive Organisations as agents of the Fascist enemy", and even claimed that they had provoked their own arrest as "the pretext for new legislation (Defence Regulation 1A(a) which restricts freedom of action by the workers)".³⁷ A statement from the Executive of the Communist Party itself on April 16th expressed annoyance at the use of the term 'Revolutionary Communist Party', and warned the public "against the small group of Trotskyists who have been endeavouring to spread disruption and foment strikes on the eve of the second front".³⁸ But the lowest level of all was reached by J.R. Campbell, in an article printed in the *Daily Worker* and then run off separately as a pamphlet, which went in for personal abuse of the defendants and others. Of Grant it was said that "all he knows about the British working-class movement might have been picked up on the back veldt", of Haston that "all this man ever did in the working class movement in his native city, could be put on the back of a penny stamp", and of Roy Tearse that he was "a third-rate inefficient shop steward". It ended with an incitement for a pogrom: "Let the light of publicity shine on these noxious creatures and the workers will find a way of dealing with them".³⁹ For weeks on end the *Daily Worker* continued to harp on this issue.

From the start all institutions where the Communist Party had any influence banned those who would defend the Trotskyists, and the first meetings had to be held in the open air. An application to the Stalinist-dominated National Council for Civil Liberties produced the response that they "could not see that any liberty of the subject was involved". "Simply nonsense", remarked Ernest Silverman, who was assisting the Council for the Defence.⁴⁰

In the case of Tearse, at least it was possible to get the support of his fellow workers at De Havillands. When the Communist Party circulated Campbell's leaflet around the factory, the Hendon branch of the R.C.P. issued a counter appeal for them to rebut this "malicious attack on the Revolutionary Communist Party, the Militant Workers' Federation, and in particular on Bro. Roy Tearse",⁴¹ and the workers in his own shop, the

Engine Shop, Test beds, passed a resolution protesting against "the statement made by J.R. Campbell in the *Daily Worker*, that Roy Tearse was a second rate shop steward", affirming that they had "always found that he did his best to defend his fellow workers against the bosses".⁴² A letter from Tearse to Gillie Sams, Secretary of the Barrow Strike Committee, elicited a similar response:

"It is the first letter I have received from a prison, and a letter that I am proud to acknowledge. The inquiries I get from the Barrow Engineers, regarding you, are numerous every day. They, like myself, can't realise that Roy Tearse is in prison. There is much indignation and sorrow, and we all hope that everything will all turn out in your favour.....

So keep your spirits up in the knowledge that your many admirers in Barrow have not forgotten you".⁴³

A similar letter of sympathy was sent to Mrs. Tearse after the convictions, expressing indignation at "the great injustice of Roy, Haston and Lee being sent to prison".⁴⁴

But expressions of solidarity, however sincere, were not enough to face the threat to the four comrades, still less the open challenge thrown down to the rights of the trades unions by both the prosecutions and Regulation 1A(a). An organised movement was desperately needed. A campaign would have to be mounted to alert the trades unions; prominent labour movement figures would have to be enlisted in support; monies would have to be collected - substantial ones, in view of the reluctance of the courts to grant bail. Finally, a legal council and a firm of solicitors would have to be engaged, and a case organised.

Fortunately, it was Easter, and the annual conference of the I.L.P. was about to meet. Quickly the National Administrative Council drafted an emergency resolution, and on April 9th Jimmie Maxton placed it before Conference:

"This Conference condemns the arrest of Heaton Lee and Ann Keen and the courts proceeding in camera against them at Newcastle on the charge of conspiring to further a strike declared illegal under the Trades Disputes and Trades Union Act of 1927.

The purpose of the policy of arrest and prosecution is to turn the eyes of the public and workers from the failure of the Government to cope in any competent way with the evils of capitalist conditions and the problem of coal production and distribution and attempts to place on the shoulders of a few hitherto unknown individuals the responsibility for a situation which has been developing for years, and for which the Governments, mine owners and miners' leaders must share responsibility.....

The I.L.P. will defend the rights and liberties of the workers to voice their dissatisfaction with the impossible situation in the mining industry".⁴⁵

Maxton spoke with fervour and wit. "I say this to Ernest Bevin and to the Prime Minister", he challenged. "If they really believe that the I.L.P. and the Trotskyists are associating together in a plot to stir up industrial trouble, don't let them go after the boys". "I am the parliamentary leader of the I.L.P.", he went on;

"They don't need Scotland Yard, the C.I.D., or any clever body of detectives to find out where I live and work. I am here, and if young fellows in my party or young fellows of a similar mind to myself are creating trouble because of ideas which I promulgate, let them haul me into the courts. Let them try me - or preferably my colleague, McGovern! And if I get before any judge who is fair-minded the verdict will be 'not guilty', unless we have now reached the stage in the War when we have decided that all order and justice is to go".

McGovern seconded, drawing out the political implications of what was happening. "We believe, along with the Trotskyist organisation, that this is a bloody imperialist struggle" he proclaimed, and that, as for the arrests, "if the police records could be examined, it would probably be discovered that Communist Party denunciations played a large part".⁴⁶

Conference carried the resolution unanimously to enthusiastic applause, and the I.L.P. struck off Maxton to act as chairman of the victims' defence committee.

The 'Anti Labour Laws' Victims' Defence Committee' was duly launched at a large public meeting in Conway Hall on May 9th, to speeches from W.G. Cove, M.P., John McGovern, V. Sastry, Ted Grant and Jimmie Maxton, with Reg Groves occupying the place of honour in the chair. Maxton expressed the hope that "the meeting might be the beginning of a really serious movement that would challenge both the capitalist class and the reactionary trade union leaders".⁴⁷ The provisional committee also included representatives from the I.L.P. and Common Wealth M.P.'s and 9 from the Labour Party, including Sorensen, Sidney Silverman, S.O. Davies, and Aneurin Bevan himself. Sastry acted as Secretary (from the R.C.P. and the Federation of Indian Associations) and Cove as Treasurer. A broad appeal for money and support was issued to the labour movement, and the firm of Smithdale, Rutledge & Co was engaged to represent the accused. This last was especially valuable, as their brief was assisted by the agile mind of Ernest Silverman, the M.P.'s brother, who was to be the one who found the loophole in the law that allowed the sentences to be quashed on appeal.

The work went on, with Maxton in particular pressing it forward. A Clydeside meeting of 3,000 came to hear himself and McGovern, and the Clyde Appeal Committee raised some £500.⁴⁸ Even when it came out in court⁴⁹ that the word "idiot" had been written against his name by one of the apprentices when they had come down to lobby Parliament, he was able to shrug off his wife's jibes. "What you're complaining about", he is alleged to

have said, "is that before, you thought that you alone knew it. Now the rest of the world knows".

The working class response was immediate, and overwhelming. Trades Councils in support included Slough, Edmonton, Banbury, and District, Newcastle and South Shields and Pontypridd, and Sheffield (Park) Labour Party, and Southend Co-op. Of the trades unions, Merthyr Vale, the largest Miners' Lodge in Wales offered support, along with the Belfast Shop Stewards, the Glasgow District A.E.U., the Nottingham Quarterly Shop Stewards' Meeting, and trades union branches almost without number in the rest of the country.

And not only in the country. Soldiers in the Eighth Army influenced by the R.C.P. petitioned Herbert Morrison for their release, and the Eighth Army Signals supported the right to strike in wartime. Even the *Eighth Army News* carried the same message:

"Eighth Army Men Say to Workers:

RIGHT TO STRIKE IS PART OF THE FREEDOM WE
FIGHT FOR".⁵⁰

Inside Durham Gaol prisoner no. 1055, Ann Keen, was trying to make sense of Lenin's *State and Revolution*, and prisoner no. 5662, Heaton Lee, was giving himself to a study of Trotsky's *Third International After Lenin*.⁵¹ Conditions were quite tolerable, as Haston recalls:

"In jail we were treated exceptionally well. I had been in prison before. The other two were star prisoners - that was Roy Tearse and Heaton Lee. Ann Keen was released immediately. She was sentenced to a week, or something, and was released immediately.

The only way in which I could contact Heaton Lee and Roy Tearse was to make an application to see the governor, because we ate outside his office with a number of crooks. What happened was, I was always put at the end of the line of applicants to see the governor, so I would chat with him for about twenty minutes of so. On another occasion it was the anniversary of Trotsky's assassination. I made an application to see the governor to have a commemoration meeting with the other two. He denied the application, and I pointed out he couldn't deny the application because it was a religious meeting. We had a very philosophical discussion about what was meant by 'religion', and my argument was, the regulations were that if there were three or more members of any denomination, they had to be given opportunities to meet together. In the end he denied the actual application, but he said "I'll see that you get together during the course of the day" which he subsequently did. So we actually had a commemoration meeting in jail.

When we arrived in Durham jail we went through the usual entry situation where your name, etc., etc., was taken and all your property is looked at, and when it came to religion I said "Dialectical

Materialist". The guy said "What?" and I said "Dialectical Materialist", and he said "How do you spell it?" and he said "Never mind, I'll put you down as D.M. When we came to the end of the production line the others heard it, and of course they said the same thing.

When we got to the end of the production line a Catholic priest picked up my paper and said, "D.M., what denomination is that?", and I said "Dialectical Materialist". His eyes lit up, and he must have thought that 'Here is a conversion job I have got on hand', and that began a half hour discussion with the priest and a couple of fellow parsons and ourselves, in which all the crooks behind us were held up, and they began to hammer their mugs, because all they wanted was their cocoa in bed. So we registered as three D.M.'s"⁵²

The trial opened in Newcastle Moor Hall on May 12th. The Prosecution subpoenaed the whole of the Executive of the Tyne Apprentices' Guild and Tom Trewartha from Barrow as prosecution witness. Trewartha protected Tearse by claiming that he was not a member of the strike committee, but that "the service rendered by Comrade Tearse to the Barrow workers was at the request of the strike committee". He explained that he had already made a statement to that effect when approached by the Chief Constable in Barrow, but that this had been deliberately withheld.⁵³ Bill Davy held firm under questioning, stating that "the approval of the apprentices was obtained for all published documents", and that "all acts undertaken were the joint acts of the apprentices".⁵⁴ All the rest of the strike committee following him in the dock held strongly to this line, with the exception of Donnachie, who went out of his way to accuse the R.C.P. of strike-spreading. He said that he had "suspected political influence was creeping into the movement", and described the meeting at which he accused the Militant Workers' Federation of being "a strike-raising body, that they created strikes up and down the country, that they created and lived on strikes, and we ought not to associate with them".⁵⁵ With the exception of this testimony and that of another hostile witness, Winter, all the witnesses for the prosecution had failed to support its case.

On their part the Trotskyists continued to maintain that the real conspiracy was that of the Government, and they subpoenaed Ernest Bevin in order to prove it. They got him to admit, in the witness box, that he had seen the letter of the apprentices giving him notice that they were going to strike, and had not deigned to reply to it - or even to advise them that they were breaking the law.

When the Trotskyists were called to the witness stand they were prepared to use it as a propaganda platform from which to denounce the Government, and they had drawn up prepared statements to help them. But here they were hampered by the attitude of their Counsel, who, in his clients' interest, but against their wishes, persisted in trying to make points

in mitigation. So having dismissed him in favour of his junior they were ready to go on, only to find that they would not be allowed to make set statements at the end of the trial at all, as such were in order in a case of felony, but not of 'misdemeanour'.

Opportunities for putting the Trotskyist case against the Government did, however, arise in a small way:

ROY TEARSE

Paley Scott: "You want to shake the country?"

Tearse: "I want a Socialist Society in Britain and the world which would completely overturn present day society".

Paley Scott: "Very awkward in time of war? I don't think so!"

Paley Scott: "I suppose this is a capitalist war?"

Tearse: "In my opinion, yes....."

Paley Scott: "Were the newspapers not correct when they stated that revolutionaries were behind the strikes? "

Tearse: "The press had lied about the Trotskyists in the same way as they lied about Lenin during the last war when they declared him as a German spy"

Paley Scott: "What did nationalisation have to do with the apprentices' case?"

Tearse: "It had everything to do with it. If the mines were nationalised under workers' control it would solve the coal crisis and make such a scheme as the Bevin Ballot scheme, which in any case couldn't solve anything, completely unnecessary".

Curtis-Bennett: "If you received notice for the army, would you go?"

Tearse: "Yes. The reason is that I should go where the workers are. If the workers are in the army, I believe we should be with them. In the same way we go into industry when conscripted along with other workers".

HEATON LEE

Lee: "I tried to teach him (i.e. Davy) what a revolutionary Communist was".

Paley Scott: "What is the difference between that and Trotskyism?"

Lee: "They are synonymous".

(Judge Cassels then asked for the definition of a 'Trotskyist'.)

Lee: "A Trotskyist is the name given to one who accepts the revolutionary ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. We are called Trotskyists to differentiate from the Stalinists, who are not Communists at all".

Paley Scott: "..... You knew that the Government couldn't nationalise the mines in three weeks?"

Lee: "Yes, I believe it could be done. The mines and the whole social services were nationalised in one week in 1917".

Paley Scott: "That was in the days of Trotsky".
("hear hear" from the dock).⁵⁶

On June 19th Mr. Justice Cassels summed up. He tried to repair the damage done by the prosecution witnesses by saying that if the defendants were guilty, then so was Bill Davy as an accomplice to them. Whilst directing the Jury not to take cognisance of the politics involved, he remarked that they may "consider that some of the witnesses on both sides" are fond of "airing their political views" and described the prisoners as "clever, practised speakers and debators, rapid in thought and ready in reply".⁵⁷ The jury was dismissed at 2.10p.m., and came back with their verdict three quarters of an hour later. They dismissed all eleven charges but two, but they were enough. "You are three dangerous persons to be at liberty at this time" said Mr. Justice Cassels passing sentence, and Jock Haston got six months and Roy Tearse and Heaton Lee got a year each. As Ann Keen had already served her thirteen days in custody she was released on the spot. An appeal was lodged immediately, but Mr. Justice Wrottesley refused bail pending, even though Jimmie Maxton and John McGovern stood as sureties. Meanwhile, Heaton Lee was sacked from his job with Wimpeys.

By this time grave disquiet was sweeping the labour movement. The Vice President of the Miners' Federation went on record to the effect that "the workers have already given up a great deal of individual liberty" already, and that 1A(a) was a "repressive regulation", "introduced on a most flimsy pretext".⁵⁸ Inside the Labour Party the attempt to move against Bevan raised such a storm that the annual conference had to be postponed. If it had gone ahead, one commentator noted that "opinion against 1A(a) was so strong in both the political and industrial wings of the party that the executive might well have been defeated and Mr. Bevan elected to the executive".⁵⁹ The mood of the working class went so deep that the Government drew back from using 1A(a), even though striking miners in Lanarkshire had already been threatened with it.⁶⁰ Moreover, despite the Stalinist propaganda barrage, few workers believed that strikes were due to agitators, and the Communist Party began to lose both members and credibility. An American reporter cabled back:

"Labour, that is, the man who does his day's work in a mine or a factory, is not satisfied with the explanation that the present strikes are the result of a 'Trotskyite' group of a few thousands".⁶¹

The case now went up to the Court of Criminal appeal, in which sat Humphreys, Tucker and Wrottesley as judges. The basis of the appeal was the work of the astute Ernest Silverman, who pointed out that all the acts with which the Trotskyists were charged concerned the period before the Tyne Apprentices' Strike took place, but that the House of Lords had already ruled as far back as 1909 that 'furtherance' could only apply to a strike that had already broken out. Thus Mr. Justice Cassels had

misdirected the jury on this point, and the verdicts of "not guilty" on the other counts thus contradicted the "guilty" ones on these two.

These arguments, placed by Mr Burge before the court, were upheld, and the sentences quashed. A few days later Mr. Justice Wrottesley read out the reasons:

"In the present case the Jury should have been directed, on the counts against the appellants alleging acts of furtherance, to confine their attention to acts committed after the strike had broken out. In fact, the Jury were told the contrary of that, and the conviction under these counts could not stand and must be quashed".⁶²

The R.C.P. and the Anti-Labour Laws' Victims' Defence Committee celebrated their victory at an enormous meeting held on the 15th September in St. Andrews Hall in Glasgow, addressed by Jock Haston, Roy Tearse and Heaton Lee. On the platform, apart from representatives from the Anarchist Federation and the I.L.P., sat a majority of the Glasgow District Committee of the A.E.U., and the chair was occupied by the Convenor of Parkhead forge. Councillor Carmichael passed on the greetings of Jimmie Maxton from his sick bed, and acclamation followed Haston's tribute to Maxton's inspiration and guidance as Chairman of the Defence Committee.⁶³ For, as *Socialist Appeal* pointed out, "only a small number of the acknowledged leaders of the working class can claim to have participated in this victory".⁶⁴

For the working class, as a whole, owed a great deal to the imprisoned Trotskyists and their supporters. It was the first prosecution ever mounted under the Trades Disputes Act of 1927, imposed upon the working class by a vengeful government after the defeat of the General Strike. Its utter failure left the whole application of that legislation in doubt. Even if it had succeeded, the arguments by which Silverman directed Mr. Burge's case before the Appeal Court "would undoubtedly have forced the court to explain the terms of Section 1(2) of the Trades Disputes Act".⁶⁵ But as it was, the fact that the prosecutions had taken place at all served warning on the working class that the Trades Disputes Act was not merely reserve legislation laid down in the event of a possible future General Strike, but was meant to apply in other situations as and when needed. "It is of no small importance to the organised working class movement that upon the first occasion the ruling class tried to use this infamous act they have suffered a defeat", commented *Socialist Appeal*. "It will be harder to use it against labour militants in future now that a victory for the working class has been effected in the first legal struggle."⁶⁶ In fact, no further attempt was made to use the act, and the Newcastle Case served to remind the movement to secure its repeal at the earlier possible opportunity - one of the first measures of the Labour Government of 1945.⁶⁷

But the significance of the trial went far beyond the application of the 1927 Act, to the far more serious inroads upon the rights of the working class

intended by Regulation 1A(a). "The Trotskyists were to be the scapegoats for the introduction of the anti-Labour Regulation 1A(a)", they pointed out. For the wording of the Trades Disputes Act and of 1A(a) were identical upon this point, that "no person shall declare, instigate or incite any other person to take part in, or shall otherwise act in furtherance of any strikes among persons engaged in the performances of essential services". This was not only an attempt to make working class action impossible, but was equally a blow against free speech. Mr. Burge pointed out to the court that "if the definition of 'furthering' a strike could be broadened to include such propaganda, any politician who went outside a factory, on his soapbox, where there was a grievance, would be in danger of arrest and imprisonment if, some months later, a strike broke out in the plant".⁶⁸ But as the judgement had defined acts "in furtherance" of a strike to be those made only after it had broken out, it also applied to that clause in Regulation 1A(a) as well. As Ernest Silverman commented, "the decision means that a man cannot be charged with any propaganda activity which results in a strike as having committed acts in furtherance of such strikes".⁶⁹ So the task of gaining prosecutions under 1A(a) now became increasingly difficult, and in the end 1A(a) was never used against the labour movement either. Rarely in its history could the entire working class have owed quite so much to so few as it did to the four prisoners, the small number of Trotskyists, and their allies in the broader movement, who stood by its rights when the entire official apparatus of the Trade unions and the Labour Party turned its back so deliberately upon them.

Even more deliberate had been the attitude of the Communist Party, and it was at this period that the Trotskyists began to attract numbers of their rank and file, and even significant secondary figures. Bill Davy came over to the R.C.P. after the Newcastle affair, as did other younger people such as Frank Rowe.⁷⁰ Rather more well established were Alec Riach, deputy convenor at Dalmuir R.O.F., and Bob Condon, a Miners' agent from Cannock who had fought with the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War, who was well-known for his articles in *Reynolds News*, as well as for spearheading the Communist Party's production drive in the mines during the early part of the War.⁷¹ Even on the international plane recruits were gained. A.C. Bannerji, the son of a High Court Judge and an Irish governess had joined the Bengali terrorist movement before the First World War. Studying medicine at Cambridge he had joined the Communist Party under the influence of Saklatvala, and visited Moscow in 1922-3. For a while he had been the Indian representative on the Communist International. He broke with the Communist Party in 1941 when it was clear that they had a position well to the right of Congress on the Indian national question, and later came over to the Trotskyists.⁷²

The recruitment of these comrades from the Communist Party reinforced the drift away from entry work at a crucial time, and encouraged the policy of trying to build a Party by the strategy of open recruitment,⁷³ and

the contesting of elections. The Party's first venture into the electoral sphere was a by-election in Neath, in the heart of the South Wales coalfield, where the Communist Party had been fast losing friends by its actions on behalf of the Government. Here the death of the sitting member for Neath since 1932, Sir William Jenkins, afforded the R.C.P. an opportunity to make a showing. The electoral truce meant that the Tories would not be standing, and only a Welsh Nationalist was present to make anything of a contest at all. The Neath Labour Party had selected as its candidate an ex N.C.L.C. organiser, D.J. Williams, who had previously been attacked by the Stalinists for recommending Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* to his classes. When the Communist Party heard that the R.C.P. was standing Jock Haston, the Secretary and Chairman of the West Wales Communists wrote to offer support to Labour, and to protest at the Trotskyists being allowed to put up a candidate. Since the Communist Party was, notoriously, still supporting a coalition with the Tories, the Labour agent, J.S. George, indignantly rejected its support, opposed the coalition, declared Labour's independence of all parties in favour of "undiluted Socialism as laid down in the very explicit Labour Party programme", and described the C.P. as a "political crutch".⁷⁴

The Trotskyist intervention could only draw its support on the basis of making an explicitly Socialist case, as from Communist to Tory all parties were supporting the Labour candidate. There would be no votes gained, as had been done by Common Wealth and the I.L.P. in similar by-elections, from Labour voters who had been denied the opportunity of a bash at the Tories by the electoral truce. The Trotskyists had been traditionally weak in South Wales, for despite the previous activity of C.L.R. James, little had been done to consolidate his impact there or lay down any organisational structure.⁷⁵ But ever since the great coal strikes in the spring of 1944, and Horner's reprehensible conduct, special efforts had been made. John Lawrence had been sent down as full-time organiser, and some recruits had been gained in Merthyr and the Swansea/Llanelli area. By December 1944 sales of *Socialist Appeal* there reached about 800. The campaign to defend the imprisoned Trotskyists had laid the basis for some expansion, as several miners' lodges, including Merthyr Vale, the largest in the S.W.M.F. and Pontypridd Labour Party, had given support to the Anti-Labour Laws Victims' Defence Committee. On the 11th November 1944 a Conference of delegates from Merthyr Trades Council and Labour Party, Merthyr I.L.P., the Dowlais, Merthyr Vale and Penalta Miners' Lodges, and local branches of the A.E.U., N.U.P.E. and the G. & M. had decided to set itself up as a permanent committee of the A.L.L.V.D.C.⁷⁶ A basis of good will, at least, had been created.

The campaign was a long one, for in the conditions of war it took some time to move the writ, and by the time the election actually took place, on May 15th, V.E. Day was being celebrated, and it was clear that a General Election was on the way. The R.C.P. concentrated its full-timers in the

area. John Lawrence was there already, Heaton Lee acted as election agent, and Frank Ward was sent down from Glasgow. Haston remembers the conditions at the time:

“Well, this was a situation in which we knew that we weren’t likely to get much of a vote. We thought we’d get three or four hundred votes, but we decided on principle that we had to stand, and though the bulk of our members were still in the Labour Party, in practice we didn’t like entry in the Labour Party, and we decided to stand in Neath because at that time, in particular, all the information about the concentration camps was coming out. We thought it was exaggerated. We were wrong. All the horrors that the Nazis did were much worse than we thought. so we were entirely wrong. But having said that, the anti-German chauvinism was very deep. In no shape or form would anybody say good things about the German working class, and we decided that we would put up an internationalist candidate to argue against the chauvinism, to demonstrate that there were internationalists in our country.

We had no contacts in the beginning in the area, but we had a couple of I.L.P. chaps who became members in the course of the campaign. We took a small shop as our headquarters. We hadn’t been there a week when some of the chaps got scabies, and I immediately came home, and got myself a scrubbing brush and scrubbed hard at them, and then I had to stay away for the whole of the campaign.

But the Stalinists, as you are probably aware, were conducting an enormous campaign, and spent much more money than we spent. We didn’t have much to spend. They spent an enormous amount campaigning against us, and just repeating “A Vote for Haston is a Vote for Hitler”.

In the event I used to have enormous meetings all over the constituency, and Clive Jenkins told me that the first meetings he attended were my meetings, when he was twelve years old in Neath at that time, and that was one of the things that made a big impact on him for a long time afterwards. We got over a thousand or fifteen hundred votes, and that was basically from Communists and Communist sympathisers. We challenged the Stalinists wherever we were. They slaughtered us in the first phases, but once we got our own speaker we were able to get outside the pits with the loud speaker, and at every pit and factory there were enormous meetings, and so with our debating skills we did exceptionally well”.⁷⁷

In fact, as the election of the Labour candidate was a foregone conclusion, the real political debate was that between Trotskyism and Stalinism, between internationalism and chauvinism, between revolution and support for the War. As was since observed, “the bitter rivalry and recrimination between the two ‘Communist’ parties was the central feature of the long

election campaign and gave the whole event its most interesting and dramatic moments".⁷⁸ The R.C.P. was obliged from the very beginning to condemn the "slandorous lies", particularly from "Churchill's Communist Party".⁷⁹ At his very first public meeting in the Miners' Hall at Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen, with Harry Finch speaking as a Bevin Boy, Haston issued a public challenge to the Communist Party to substantiate their allegations in a free debate.⁸⁰

To begin with the Stalinists refused, for they were in an incomparably stronger position, in which they would be providing the audience for the Trotskyists from among their own supporters. So the Secretary of the West Wales Communist Party, Jack Maunder, wrote to the *Neath Guardian* to refuse, quoting the Moscow Trials to prove that the Trotskyists were Fascists, asking "why should we provide a platform for traitors? There are far more appropriate and effective ways of dealing with them."⁸¹ The R.C.P. reply was to keep up the pressure for a debate:

"Workers of Neath! If the statements of the 'Communist' Party are true, then they should be only too eager to expose us before the public. But because they will be exposed, firstly as helpers of Hitler, and now as supporters of Churchill, they dare not debate. Continually we have challenged them to debate; always they have refused."⁸²

The local leaders were evidently having a hard time of it, so veteran practitioners like Idris Cox were sent down to stiffen them. But he did no better when he spoke at a meeting in Resolven, where, to take the pressure off the C.P., he began to blame the Tories for the mismanagement of industry. The Trotskyists were quick to remind him from the floor that he had campaigned for the Tories himself with the slogan "A Vote for Brockway is a Vote for Hitler".⁸³ The C.P. put out several leaflets⁸⁴ and even a pamphlet, denouncing the R.C.P. as "agents of Fascism", "wolves in sheep's clothing", and "far more dangerous than a Fascist paratrooper".⁸⁵

But abuse of this type, totally unsubstantiated, only had the effect of drawing attention to the Trotskyists. A much more damaging attack was that of Will Lawther, who denounced the R.C.P. as "self-appointed prophets" who had "not received the support of a single trade union organisation",⁸⁶ whilst others made much of the fact that the Labour candidate was a miner, and asked "What has Haston done for the Miners?".⁸⁷ For the Trotskyist position was at its weakest in terms of its implantation inside the working class. They could only reply by quoting their long agitation for the miners in *Socialist Appeal* and at the Newcastle Trial, and by calling upon such support as they had inside the N.U.M.:

"(Bob Condon) went to Neath and spoke on the R.C.P. platform in full support for Jock Haston, our candidate. What happened then? The Stalinists and right wing bureaucrats in Wales raised a national slander campaign. From all sides the Cannock Union was belaboured

with threatening letters from the bureaucrats. In Cannock, the old reactionaries who were, in large measure, swept out of office by the advent of Condon's coming to the position of miners' agent and his reorganisation of the union, were able to raise strong resolutions that were sent to the Union Council, and it was by a hair's breadth that comrade Condon was not then thrown right out of his position. Only the fact that he was a new agent, and had done some good Union work already saved his skin. But then he was ordered by the union that under no circumstances was he to appear on R.C.P. platforms unless he made it clear that he was speaking as an individual".⁸⁸

But in the end the Communists realised that they would have to debate with the R.C.P. if they were to maintain any credibility at all. The final eve-of-poll meeting of the R.C.P. was turned over to this confrontation, and it attracted a far larger audience than the official candidate of the Labour Party: as Frank Ward, acting as steward, recalls:

"I think that I was outside most of the time, trying to organise the crowds that were coming in. It was absolutely packed, and there were crowds outside..... There were certainly a lot of people who couldn't get in and turned and walked away, but potentially there would have been a thousand. Certainly it was absolutely packed..... I saw part of the debate, and I must admit I don't remember much of the argument. I can just remember Ted on the end of the table, diving down every time the C.P. put the point over, and kept coming out with some select counter-quotation..... There were one or two raucous voices shouting out, but these were hushed, hushed by the rest of the audience. There was some clapping, but certainly no cheering. It was a decent, respectful listening to the debate."⁸⁹

The Communist spokesman, Alun Thomas, made the main burden of his contribution the older slanders of the Moscow Trials, claiming that the Trotskyists were Fascists, and served as Fifth Columnists for the Germans and Italians. Haston replied with a detailed analysis of the tortuous progress of Communist policy from the Popular Front to 1945, and with what a real Communist attitude should have been. "We slaughtered their line on the public platform", recalls Haston; "we put the whole of the Trotskyist tenets - nothing to do with the Neath election".⁹⁰

It was indeed a very successful performance. Many of the 'advanced' workers who attended W.E.A. classes found the R.C.P., and Haston in particular, very impressive.⁹¹ Election meetings had held audiences of 750 and 1500, 30,000 leaflets had been distributed, and the special election issue of *Socialist Appeal* had gone through 7500 sales. Moreover, Haston remained on good terms with D.J. Williams, the official Labour candidate, to the extent that he was able to use his influence to get Haston a job as N.C.L.C. lecturer after the collapse of the R.C.P. in 1949.⁹²

But the main gain of the campaign from the R.C.P. point of view was to establish an authentic Communist presence, if only for a while, in an area notoriously saturated with Stalinism. The gains that were made were enough to make it worth keeping a full-timer there. According to Haston:

“The net result of that was that we brought in several groups of workers. We got a group of miners, particularly up in the anthracite district. We got a group of workers in Neath. We got a group in Pontypridd. We got several groups of workers in the nickel works there, and places like that, so we did quite well out of it. I think we came out with 30 members - we came out of it quite well”.⁹³

But the vote on May 15th did not reflect this intense activity at all. D.J. Williams received 30,847 votes, the Welsh Nationalist 6,290 and Haston only 1,781. The reason for this was that, despite the fact that Williams was the official candidate of the wartime coalition, and that on polling day the *Western Mail* had advised all Tories and Liberals to vote for him, it was plain that the wartime electoral truce was over. The final week of the campaign coincided with V.E. Day, the Labour Conferences of 1944 and 1945 had already decided against continuing the coalition, and Churchill resigned and precipitated a General election only a week after the by-election in Neath. In these circumstances the main slogan of the R.C.P. - “Break the Coalition, Labour to Power” could only seem unreal to most of the electors, as Labour was in the process of doing exactly that. The concerns of the Neath working class were already ranging over the nature of the post-war world. Frank Ward sensed this in the atmosphere that surrounded his canvassing:

“Well, everybody, the workers, the middle strata, absolutely everybody was in a questioning, debating mood, and they would give you a hearing, and they would listen, because they were puzzled. They were not desperate, but they were fairly well convinced that changes were coming, and anybody who proposed changes they would listen to. I can only speak for myself. I think I learned an awful lot having to bring wild generalisations down to answer some of the nitty, gritty, awkward questions that they wanted to know. To put it mildly: ‘How do you set up Soviets?’, or ‘Why would they be able to do things better?’ I think in practice we had to push a lot of our conceptions into the back-ground. We would justify it in all sorts of ways - that ‘time wasn’t quite ripe for it’. But possibly it was because we were not able to convince workers over certain areas with the traditional Trotskyist approach, or the traditional Leninist approach, and therefore we were beginning to hedge, like any others. Well, perhaps that is what we had to learn”.⁹⁴

In fact, the R.C.P. had much to learn, for events were fast overtaking it. Its perspective of functioning as a fully fledged political party on the electoral

level, which continued with attempts to put up Herbie Bell and 'Mazo' Martinson as local councillors six months later⁹⁵ was missing the opportunity of a generation by the reawakening of the Labour Party to political life at the end of the War, and the end of the wartime truce.

The strategy of the leaders of the Labour Party to hang onto coalition until at least the end of the War came under considerable strain as 1944 wore on. Their attempt to discipline Bevan for opposing 1A(a), and the general hostility it had awoken within the movement had forced them to postpone the Labour Party Annual Conference until the end of the year, whilst the coalition was breaking down in the country. On 18th February, 1944, the local Labour candidate in West Derby stood against the Tories in a seat held previously by them, and took the seat by 4561 votes. Sensing the feeling in the constituencies, the N.E.C. promised, in *Labour and the General Election*, a statement issued on October 7th, that they would run as an independent party in the election at the end of the War. But even this was insufficient to satisfy the local Labour Parties. When conference finally met as late as 11th-15th December, the main attacks from the floor centered upon the paragraph in the statement that held that the coalition should continue at all. By this time news had come through of how the British army was smashing the Greek guerilla movement led by the Communist Party, and conference was incensed with "the Fascist drift of this government" which had produced "a government propped up solely by British arms". Welcoming the N.E.C. statement that at least the coalition would come to an end, one delegate described how "we begin to see the end of our long period of servitude, and the result is that life in our local parties is beginning to stir again and we look forward to the real struggle which we know lies ahead of us when the military one is over". Barbara Castle even asked if the leadership had "the conception of a great man like Lenin of seeing the circumstances before it and being prepared to use those circumstances for the achievement of working-class power".⁹⁶

On May 8th, 1945, came the official announcement that Victory in Europe was achieved, and on June 15th Parliament was dissolved and polling day set for July 15th. The whole labour movement, and with it the Labour Party, came alive again in the struggle to elect a Labour government after 14 years of coalition and National Government misrule. Wards swelled to 70 people in attendance, and in union after union the movement routed the attempts by the Communist Party to float another coalition.⁹⁷ Persons hitherto unconnected with the Labour Party were selected as candidates, and promptly voted into Parliament, in an atmosphere in which 90% of the soldiers were said to have voted Labour. The Labour Party gained an overall parliamentary majority for the first time in its history.

The R.C.P. threw itself into this struggle, but from outside. The main slogan for many years had been "Break the Coalition, Labour to Power", and in many different places R.C.P. members took the lead in rejecting the defeatism of the Stalinists.⁹⁸ All over the country their members did sterling

work assisting the local Labour parties, and in denouncing the C.P.'s attempts to split the working class vote for the benefit of the Tories.⁹⁹ A special leaflet issued at the time proclaimed:

“Down with Tory Reaction!

The fight is on. The labour movement is no longer tied to the coat tails of big business. It now has an opportunity of ridding itself of the Tory capitalist government. On a fighting Socialist programme the Labour Party could gain an overwhelming majority”.

In calling for a vote to Labour, and warning the electors against “His Majesty’s Communist Party”, the R.C.P. pointed out on what principles they were campaigning:

“We say to the working class: without your support, it is impossible to overthrow capitalism and introduce a new society. You do not support our party at this stage but believe, as many workers put it, that *We must give Labour a chance*; they say and they believe that the Labour Party can solve the problems of the workers. Fellow workers, together with you, we will go through the experience, and we are convinced that by the experience you will find that our criticism is one hundred percent correct.....

The next stage forward on the march of the working class toward power lies in a majority Labour Government. But we believe that the problems of the working class can only be solved when a mass revolutionary party, basing itself in the scientific teachings of Marx and Lenin, stands at the head of the working class.....

Workers! Down with the Tory National Government!

Vote Labour! For a Majority Labour Government!”¹⁰⁰

The politics of this statement are unexceptional, and the norm in Leninist analysis in this country, but the R.C.P. could not see how, with its small numbers and its claim that it was a political party, it was not in a position to offer a united front to the Labour Party on that level. The only meaningful level at which this could have been done was from inside, the entrust tactic. Some reminiscences of John Goffe are especially valuable in connection with the crisis of 1944-5:

“The question of entrism was really in cold storage for the War period, but as soon as the end of the War came into sight, then that question was raised again, and of course, the Majority leaders there bolstered or flushed up by their own success in creating the Revolutionary Communist Party..... still believed in the possibility of building this up. In my opinion, this was a non-starter once you got back to the 1945 situation, with the elections and the development of Labour politics once again.

In fact, I think that an enormous opportunity was missed. Had they gone into the election campaign as supporters and members of

the Labour Party, a distinct tendency, I think they could have created an enormous impression, and really placed themselves inside the Labour Party and the labour movement. I well recall lots of incidents in the 1945 General election. I remember (and I was still in Glasgow at that time) getting up on a soap box, or some kind of platform, in some side street off Sauchiehall Street, and within a few minutes gathering an audience of several hundred, simply based on a political line that attacked Churchill on his whole record, attacked the coalition government on its entire record, and demanded the election of a majority Labour Government, and going on from there. Never in my whole political life had I found so much response to such a demand, which clearly in terms of programme was demanding, not only that they became a majority Labour Government, but steps they should take at that time to introduce Socialism. I believe that had there been an effective Trotskyist force at that time it could have made a much more significant contribution than Trotskyists have ever yet succeeded in doing in British politics. That was an isolated incident then, but I would do it time and time again (and incidentally against the passive resistance of the leadership of the Revolutionary Communist Party - of course, they didn't like me). But because I was representing a line and very well organised, and being able to do it, I got support.

It was the local people up there in Glasgow who were in support of us. I remember at the same meeting some of them came there on a tram, saw what was happening, leapt off the tram, and came round. We sold 100 or more papers in the course of the meeting I was conducting there. I must say I could never do it again, because speaking to a crowd of several hundred in a small side street off Sauchiehall Street, with trams moving backwards and forwards, I don't think I could speak at a two-hour meeting - with no microphones that exist now. I well remember that meeting, and it was interesting - about what could have been achieved with a real Trotskyist approach at that time. Because entry couldn't have been resisted in the drive, which was a revolutionary drive, which brought the Attlee Government to power in 1945. The votes were radical, for a revolutionary change. It could have been a much bigger step forward in revolutionary politics at that time".¹⁰¹

Pierre Frank also commented upon the situation along much the same lines. "The landing in Europe having been successful", he noted, "the British working class and the British soldiers turned back towards the Labour Party in order to throw out the Tory Government. It was not necessary to have complicated means of investigation in order to feel this new current as early as the end of the Summer of 1944. There were no more unofficial strikes. We saw a beginning of the reanimation of the traditional organisations".¹⁰²

The R.C.P. perspective of open party work prepared them badly for the speed of events. The policy adopted at the founding conference affirmed that "whereas the perspective of a mass left swing into the Labour Party may, at a later stage, necessitate the total entry of our forces into the Labour Party, such a perspective is most unlikely, but if this situation arises our forces will probably enter the Labour Party through the affiliated I.L.P." ¹⁰³ Even the overwhelming victory of the Labour Party, following a period of almost unprecedented ferment in the ranks of the labour movement made no essential difference to the R.C.P. strategy:

"Words alone can never produce the stage of political development necessary to achieve the Socialist Revolution. The propagation of ideas, no matter how profound the ideas, or how brilliantly they are portrayed, will of itself prove inadequate to convince the broad masses of the people of the correctness of a political doctrine. Only when the ideas which we advocate are confirmed by events, by the experiences of the workers themselves, will they win the support necessary for their practical operation. The election of a Labour Government with such an overwhelming majority opens up a new stage in the struggle for Socialism. Great is the responsibility which rests on the shoulders of the revolutionary party; for the movement away from Social Democracy to revolutionary politics, consequent on the betrayals of the Labour leaders, is not an automatic or inevitable process. It will be accomplished only if the activity of the revolutionary party is in its correctness and amplitude, commensurate with the tasks imposed. That is, *only if we succeed in appearing before the mass of workers as an alternative leadership*". ¹⁰⁴

Yet there was no awareness that without direct participation in the process, the very best of Socialist programmes would remain just that - words. The independence of the revolutionary party of a few hundreds from the mass organisations can only condemn the best of programmes to impotence. No amount of pride in past achievements, or confidence in future possibilities, could disguise the fact that the independence of a few hundreds organisationally separated from the class is a source of weakness, not of strength:

"We are not as isolated from the workers as we were ten years ago. We already have a sympathetic contact with the best workers in the Labour and Trade Union movement, denied to us in the past. From the ranks of Stalinism many fine proletarians are turning to the Trotskyist movement. Our press has a stable circulation and is established among the left wing workers in most industrial areas as the paper of Revolutionary Communism. These factors impel us forward to build the Revolutionary Communist Party independently and openly under our own organisational banner."

The stagnation of the R.C.P. and its isolation from the mass of the militant workers, particularly the advanced strata in a period of social upheaval; the unprecedented growth of the Labour Party, particularly among the youth; the emergence of a left centrist wing moving in the direction of revolutionary struggle - these principle and other secondary factors would immediately pose anew the task of throwing the full weight of the Party at the point of attack - the Labour Party, and would pose point blank the question of entry, if necessary, 'illegally' ".¹⁰⁵

No better guidance upon these topics came from the International movement.¹⁰⁶ They also shared the false perspective that the I.L.P. would provide a springboard back into the Labour Party should entry become a viable prospect. Sam Gordon, reporting on the founding conference of the R.C.P., defined "the next great political task" as "the elimination of the centrist I.L.P. as an obstacle on the road to the revolutionary masses", and he believed that it was "entirely feasible to set as a formal perspective the winning of a majority of the I.L.P. for Trotskyism".¹⁰⁷ Accordingly, Pierre Frank argued most vociferously for entry into the I.L.P., backed by the Healy Minority, at the August 1945 conference of the R.C.P. with the slogan of "full course towards the left wing and the winning of a majority of the I.L.P.! That's the order of the day for the British combat party of the world revolution!"¹⁰⁸ When the first negotiations of Brockway and McGovern with Transport House resulted in the expulsion of the Trotskyists in the I.L.P. as a preliminary part of the bargain, the perspective was quietly dropped.¹⁰⁹

The real reason that the entry perspective was never seriously considered at this period was that the R.C.P. was deeply involved in a factional struggle with the most consistent entrists, the 'Left Fraction' of the old R.S.L., which had refused to become assimilated into the R.C.P. when the fusion occurred. The 'Left' went through with the fusion under protest, as to refuse to do so would have been to repudiate the authority of the Fourth International. They accused the International Secretariat of liquidating the British Section, the R.S.L., into a defencist organisation, the W.I.L., in order to set up the R.C.P. They maintained that the I.S. had done this because, by accepting the Proletarian Military Policy, the W.I.L. had abandoned Socialist internationalism and revolutionary defeatism in the countries of 'democratic' imperialism in the same way as the I.S. had done. So whilst the 'Left Fraction' remained in the Fourth International in order to carry on the struggle on the international level, they refused to accept the authority of the R.C.P. The two professionals, Roddy Hood and Tom Mercer, refused to serve on the Central Committee, and the Left maintained its own separate organisation, its own dues, its two professionals, and its Secretary, Mercer. At the fusion conference they made a timely warning of the dangers of abandoning the Labour Party tactic

which, though sharing an ultra-leftist perspective of revolution or fascism with the International Secretariat, still contained much of value:

“The final resurgence of the masses, the exposure of Social Democracy, the acceptance of revolutionary leadership, and the achievement and retention of state power, or alternatively, disillusionment, demoralisation and the victory of fascism - will occur over a period of a few months. This resurgence, the radicalisation of the masses, cannot, assuming the perspective of a rapid tempo of capitalist decline, be long delayed; hence a prolonged period of growth in open organisational opposition to Social Democracy is excluded. The historically determined course of development of the masses towards Social Democracy necessitates that the B.S.F.I. integrates itself in the ranks of the working class and does not attempt to counterpose itself organisationally to the inevitable course of history.....

Where the revolutionary party is too weak to demand of the leadership of the Labour Party the conclusion of a United Front, the United Front tactic is capable of adaption. The Entrist or Labour Party tactic has been proved by the practical experiences of the Fourth International to be the required modification.¹¹⁰

The Left also maintained its hold upon the *Militant Scottish Miner*, through which it influenced a group of I.L.P. and Labour Party miners. As the fusion conference had vested the control of all journals in the united R.C.P. this was bound to cause friction from the start. On March 29th, 1944, under the instructions of the Central Committee, the Secretary wrote to Gibbie Russell (Donaldson) asking him to transfer the ownership of the Pioneer Publishing Association which published the paper, to the R.C.P.¹¹¹ For months letters passed back and forth with no result, and the Left refused to allow Roy Tearse as Industrial Organiser onto the editorial board. The Left's attitude was that the paper “was used on behalf of the miners”, that their influence was limited to the insertion of editorials, etc., and after nearly a year of acrimonious correspondence only agreed to hand it over “once the Left Fraction had seen that the miners no longer needed the paper”.¹¹² The totally different political perspectives of the ‘Left’ and the R.C.P. were well illustrated by an editorial printed to influence the Labour Party Conference in December 1944. There the ‘Left’, over Russell's signature, revived the slogan of “A Third Labour Government”, that had been such a bone of contention between the W.I.L. and the R.S.L. in the past,¹¹³ as well as giving the impression that the election of a Labour government to office was the same as placing the working class in power:

“The postponed Annual Conference of the Labour Party takes place in December. On its agenda are questions of vital importance to the whole working class.

It is essential that the votes of the rank and file, particularly the trade unions, should be heard.

The decisions taken in December may determine which class, capitalist or working class, will hold power in the period immediately following the end of the War in Europe. It will be a disaster, incalculable in its magnitude, if power in this country is still in the hands of the capitalist class.....

The question of power, therefore, because of these and other reasons, is the main, the fundamental question before Conference. A large number of divisional and constituency parties have already demanded that an end be put to the political truce. This demand must be supported. If we fail to end the present coalition we postpone indefinitely the struggle for power. We cannot afford to do so. We have already delayed too long.....

Everything else on the agenda is subordinate to the main question of the electoral truce and political power. Post-war settlements, housing, post-war planning, social security, all these questions are class questions. We can draw up whatever plans we like, but if we do not succeed in returning a Third Labour Government with the majority in Parliament, these questions and all others will be settled in the interest of the capitalist class, not in the interest of the workers".¹¹⁴

Not surprisingly, the Political Bureau of the R.C.P., noting that "throughout the article the question of power is linked *only* with the ending of the *electoral truce*", concluded that "the 'Left' fraction, in the worst tradition of reformism, confuse the question of STATE POWER with a parliamentary majority", and described the editorial as "crass opportunism" and "advocacy of left reformism as a solution to the problems of our epoch".¹¹⁵ Difficulties also arose over the transfer of two Left Fraction members from entry to open work at the suggestion of the Glasgow branch, so it was obvious that confrontation could not be avoided at the R.C.P. Second National Congress in August, 1945.

The 'Lefts' statement to conference could not be expected to appeal to the members of the R.C.P., couched in the terms that it was. They defended their editorial with the (unexceptional) remark that "we must become *the most loyal members* of the L(about) P(arty) but at the same time we must be the foremost in the struggle against its political expression, against reformism". But as far as the R.C.P. was concerned, they described it as politically "bankrupt", and "strongly tainted with reactionary nationalism". In a way that could not be expected to appeal to anyone, they declared:

"We participate as we do in the R.C.P., only because we are compelled to recognise its authority. We participate in order the better to deprive it of that authority and to counteract, insofar as we

find possible, the use of that authority in the disorientation of the British workers. Were we to do otherwise we should not be worthy of the support we seek internationally. We struggle for the support of the F.I. against the present I.S. Our membership of the B.S.F.I. is an invaluable aid in that struggle".¹¹⁶

When the Left refused subsequently to accept the authority of the R.C.P. their expulsion was formalised in September 1945, and an appeal to the International Secretariat failed to raise any response at all. But membership of the R.C.P. was a responsibility they were glad to dispense with. "Our expulsion from the R.C.P. constituted a victory", they wrote afterwards: "we had nothing to gain from continuing membership of the R.C.P".¹¹⁷

However, turning to direct entry work on their own behalf raised almost insuperable problems. In November 1945 they had only 18 members, and almost the whole time of Robinson, Mercer and Hood had been taken up with the polemic inside the R.C.P. The rank and file had been establishing themselves in the Labour Party on their own account without any political guidance, and communications were breaking down with the leadership: "The rank and file member, so long divorced from a Bolshevik theoretical and organisation existence, was in danger of becoming more and more just a Labour Party militant".¹¹⁸ At the same time the theoretical problems of the post-war world were proving to be contrary to the traditional perspectives of the Fourth International. Under all these strains the Left Fraction broke up.

Only two issues of their new duplicated entry paper, *The Voice of Labour*, had appeared, and Tom Mercer and Harry Selby were expelled from the Glasgow Labour Party for contributing to it. When Mercer and Hood, the two professionals, failed to produce the next issue on the scheduled date, Robinson charged them with altering the line of the group, of "having deliberately connived at the defeat of the working class".¹¹⁹ A special conference called for August 1946 left Mercer and Hood in their positions, but transferred the leadership to London. Then another series of shocks began to disperse the leaders of the organisation. Roddy Hood was mistakenly persuaded to give himself up to the authorities:

"He was one of our professionals - that is, he was full-time - on our essentially illegal basis during the War. Whilst I was on leave of absence, the Government started to talk about an amnesty for people who had deserted from the army, and evidently the group had come to a decision that it should take advantage of this to get Roddy off the hook. But it was too trustful of the Government. The Government never made that amnesty, and Roddy gave himself up. He was arrested and sent to the glasshouse at Aldershot. I can't remember the dates, it must have been post-war..... Now what he suffered in the glasshouse at Aldershot was presumably what others suffered..... Anyway, as far as I know, it completely shattered Roddy. I did not see him afterwards".¹²⁰

At this crucial time John Robinson himself had taken leave of absence from the group to sort out some personal problems. Hearing that Margaret Maclean had been expelled in Glasgow on inadequate grounds, Robinson wrote to say that "this won't do", only to be told that his own expulsion had been moved and carried because he had broken his leave of absence by intervening. The Faction was, in effect breaking up. As Selby later recalled:

"The seeds of disunity had been planted and general fatigue took its toll. The members of the Faction had undergone a struggle for years inside the R.S.L., then the R.C.P., and now flung into a fight against the Right Wing of the Labour Party, on the basis of an elementary right in this demoralised condition, proved too much for most. Internal disputes reached a level of personal recrimination. Together with this differences arose as to the nature of the states being set up by the Stalinists in the occupied states producing a polemic which was not conducted in the friendliest of terms".¹²¹

The Left Fraction finally collapsed in 1950 when Mercer and Hood took the paper with them and joined the 'Socialist Fellowship' and along with it Gerry Healy's organisation. A statement appearing in *Socialist Outlook* announced:

"An identity of policy between the *Voice of Labour* and *Socialist Outlook* has become apparent since the outbreak of the Korean crisis. It has been agreed, therefore, by the comrades associated with me in producing this paper that in the interests of unity we should cease publication and assist in building the influence of the *Socialist Outlook*. Our subscribers will be notified individually. We take the opportunity of thanking Labour Party members for their past support.

T.Mercer, Editor, *Voice of Labour*".¹²²

The majority felt deserted by their professionals, and after an attempt to keep activity going by giving out leaflets at meetings, most of them left.

The R.C.P. had a stronger material base and an incomparably better class composition, and it was to be some time before it declined at the same rate, and for parallel reasons. The change in the whole situation consequent upon the coming to power of the Labour Government had an immediate impact upon the influence that the R.C.P. had been building up within the trade union movement, and despite a leading rôle played in strike agitation, the results were disappointing. As Roy Tearse explained it:

"Of course, what it really meant is, that our strength rested essentially in the periphery that was held together by the active comrades who were members of the organisation. So what it really meant was that the periphery we had, became more involved in this movement towards the Labour government - obviously, being active workers -

more than anyone else. So really what happened was, that one day we discovered that we were still shouting and nobody was listening. It was as simple as that. History used a sledge hammer on the Trotskyist movement".¹²³

As Charlie Van Gelderen observed at the time, they did "not expect the workers to be so 'tolerant' of a Labour Government as they proved to be".¹²⁴ But the first signs that a new atmosphere was abroad were to be observed in the agitation in the building industry. Here the chaos had been apparent for some time. The blitz had added to the housing shortage, and official estimates held that at least a million new homes were needed. Yet the Coalition Government had only laid plans to build 100,000 houses in the first year after the War. During the War Bevin had imposed the hated "payment by results" on the building trade,¹²⁵ whilst workers engaged in blitz repair work had been drafted in from the provinces and were living in dreadful hostel accommodation in London.¹²⁶ At the other end of the scale a movement of "Housing Vigilantes" had sprung up in different parts of the country that was squatting in unused houses for the families of ex-servicemen.¹²⁷ Within weeks of the Government coming to power a series of unofficial strikes began to break out among the thousands of provincial building workers in London at the derisory pay offer of the employers.

The R.C.P. was involved in this agitation from the start. Heaton Lee and Johny Byrne had a lot of contact with the Irish building workers in London, and, as Byrne remembers, "we began organising them against their atrocious conditions - we organised strikes by these workers against the conditions."¹²⁸ After a while Byrne noticed that he was being shadowed by detectives, and shortly afterwards he was told that they had refused to renew his six month's residence permit, and he was given two weeks to leave the country.¹²⁹

After six frustrating months, in which the builders' leaders negotiated for a mere 4d. an hour extra, unofficial strikes began to break out, aimed against the supineness of the union leaders as much as anybody else. Jock Milligan of the R.C.P. was to the front in this agitation. He had been leading strikes since the mid thirties, and despite attempts by the Executive of the Painters' Society to remove him as branch chairman¹³⁰ had carried out successful work in the union throughout the War, from which he was sent to serve as a delegate on the Camberwell and London Trades Councils. His influence in the union can be gauged from his activity at the time of the jailing of the R.C.P. leaders, when, as Tearse recalls:

"The industrial contact that we had..... was also among building workers. Alf Loughton, who was the old militant I referred to, was a building worker..... Jock, of course, was an old comrade. He had been associated with the Trotskyist movement from its infancy. He was a militant of tremendous calibre. I spoke at practically every branch of the Painters' Union certainly - that was Jock's work..... I

spoke at every Woodworkers' Branch, I spoke at every Plumbers' branch in the South of London, and the reason for this was nothing else except the influence of Jock Milligan".¹³¹

Milligan and the others under R.C.P. influence quickly got out a leaflet condemning the "total absence of militancy, an apparent eagerness to appease the employers, a tendency to compromise rather than challenge" on behalf of the union leaders, and pointing out that "faced with such inept and impotent leadership the worker is driven either to negative cynicism or despair".¹³² On September 8th, 1945 the Shop Stewards' Committee, on which Milligan and Loughton served, called a demonstration to Hyde Park at which an estimated 90,000 building workers turned up, many of them carrying banners calling upon the union leadership to resign, and Loughton was on the delegation sent to see Aneurin Bevan. The union bureaucracy, and particularly the Communist Party, realised that they must behead a movement that was plainly getting out of hand. The Communists on the Shop Stewards' Committee managed to get it to call a conference of delegates from 'Progress Committees', on which sat employers' representatives as well as trade unionists, and this took control of the strike away from the delegates from works committees. Then the Stalinist-controlled London District Committee of the National Society of Painters accused Milligan of "acting against the interests of the union" by issuing the leaflet, and took his and another shop steward's credentials away. So on 22nd October, 200 shop stewards attended a meeting which demanded that Milligan be reinstated, or threatened that the whole of the Lewisham building workers would be out on strike. Three days later Milligan was reinstated, and paid full wages for the period in which he had been under suspension.¹³³ Although the strikes made little headway, the rank and file movement, the Building Workers' Campaign Committee, accepted the R.C.P. Programme, and the Chairman of the Glasgow Committee and the Secretary, Chairman and Treasurer of the London Committee were all recruited to the R.C.P. from the Communist Party in the course of the dispute.¹³⁴ But this did not compensate for the failure of the strike.

The dock strike that coincided with it brought no gains at all to the R.C.P. The strike began in Birkenhead demanding 25/- a day and a 40 hour week. Soon all Merseyside was at a standstill, and then it spread to Hull and Manchester, and then into the London Docks. The government behaved with the utmost high-handedness. Amid press slanders that the unofficial strikers were "starving the children", and were even to blame for the continuation of rationing, the Government, within six weeks of coming to power, had sent troops to break the strike in the Surrey docks, and six weeks later used 21,000 conscripts to smash the national movement, which finally caved in on 5th November, 1945. The Communists scabbed vigorously on the strike,¹³⁵ and both the Liverpool and the London Dockers elected strongly anti-Stalinist strike committees.¹³⁶ But the R.C.P. had hardly any

implantation on the docks. The head of its docks group, Charles Martinson, worked as a gig boatman and timber loader, and despite his honorable record in the working class movement,¹³⁷ did not have the support or influence. That did not, of course, prevent the yellow press from describing him as the London strike leader's "assistant", "who calls himself a member of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Great Britain".¹³⁸ This stemmed from an incident in which he had been called from a café in the Connaught road to address a meeting, at which he denied that he represented the Liverpool Dockers, and put the case for the R.C.P.¹³⁹ When Arthur Deakin joined in, Powell, leading the London dockers, was obliged to "most strongly deny that this is a Revolutionary Communist Party strike, or that we are striking because any political organisation has brought pressure to bear on us."¹⁴⁰ Not a single docker joined the R.C.P. as a result of the strike.¹⁴¹

The fact that the rest of the working class movement was fairly quiescent at this time was not interpreted correctly by the R.C.P. Because of the nature of the job, union organisation in the building trade and on the docks was fairly volatile, and not very well integrated into the labour movement. The dockers, in particular, were well known for their attitude of 'going it alone' and ignoring the rest of the movement. Most of the working class was anxious not to make any difficulties for the new Government. The quality of the industrial militants that the R.C.P. was picking up from the Communist Party¹⁴² was disguising the fact that its periphery in the wider movement was fast dwindling. The advanced workers in the Communist Party were evidently bewildered by the fact that the Stalinists were continuing the industrial truce even though the supposed reason for it, the wartime emergency, was at an end. A gulf separated their consciousness from that of the rest of the working class, saturated with reformist illusions and waiting hopefully for the Labour government to deliver its promises.

In failing to reintegrate itself in the Labour Party in the crucial year before the 1945 General Election, the Trotskyist movement lost the opportunity of a generation. As a very perceptive later commentator summarised it:

"The R.C.P. was relatively effective, but its failure to understand the Labour Party tactic and the development of the revolutionary process utilising bourgeois democracy was a signal failure and one which was to hamper its development. The R.C.P. had considerable influence and yet a comparison of its political record with its industrial record (e.g. putting up a candidate under an R.C.P. label and gaining a few hundred votes) was derisory and in no sense matched up to the kind of intentions which the R.C.P. announced. Whether they were influenced by ultra-leftist ideas (which were not confined to the R.S.L.) or whether it was simply a mistake in its strategy and tactics

politically in relation to the Labour Party, is of no matter at this particular moment.

This evidence of ultra-leftism in political action, in terms of reading the situation, meant that the R.C.P. failed to either gain a mass following from its open work or a mass basis from its desultory Labour Party work. It did carry on Labour Party entrust work; indeed, some of the members who were to make up the R.C.P. had already been engaged in Labour Party work, as well as work in the I.L.P. But above all, the R.C.P. was characterised by its open work and at the 1944 Conference of the Labour Party it made no impact at all on its ideas. Yet this was at a time when the Labour Party was not a dead organisation at rank-and-file level, particularly towards the end of the War..... The R.C.P. did not involve itself in this situation.....¹⁴³

Notes

1. C.f. Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back*, London, 1982, p.117.
2. 'The Strike Wave in Britain and the English Trotskyists', in *Fourth International*, vol. v, no. 4, April 1944, p.99.
3. i.e. the 18th National Congress of the C.P.G.B., 25th November, 1945.
4. Arthur Horner, *The Communist Party and the Coal Crisis*, C.P.G.B. pamphlet, 1945 p.6. C.f. R. Croucher, *Engineers at War*, London, 1982, p.240. It is difficult for this reason to agree with J. Gale that "there was not a desperate strike situation at the time" ('War Time Cabinet Discusses Trotskyism', in *Workers Press*, 12th November, 1975, p.8.).
5. Op. cit., n. 1, above, pp. 104, 113-4.
6. Jack Rawlings, Interview with Sam Bornstein, September, 1973.
7. Roy Tearse, Interview with Al Richardson, 6th July, 1978.
8. *Appeal from the Tyne Apprentices to the Miners* (leaflet), 8th January, 1944.
9. *An Appeal from the Tyne Apprentices to the Organised Working Class* (leaflet) signed by 'J. Wm. Davy, Secretary' and issued by the 'Tyne Apprentices' Guild (non political)'. C.f. Dan Smith, "Tyne Apprentices Fight Bevin's Ballot Scheme", in the *New Leader* vol. xxxv, no. 45, 15th January, 1944; "Tyne Apprentices Fighting on Class Basis", *New Leader*, vol. xxxv, no. 46, 22nd January, 1944.
10. C.f. note 7, above.
11. C.f. Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back*, London, 1982, p.118.
12. Statement by Heaton Lee to the Newcastle Trial, p.1. C.f. note 9, above.
13. Op. cit., p.6. C.f. Croucher, *Engineers at War*, London, 1982, p.235. This whole account (pp.230-44) repays close study, not only because of the detailed factual matter, but also as an illustration of the bias produced by too heavy reliance upon a particular group of sources, apparently the contacts and material supplied by those incorrigible Moscow-line Stalinists, the Frows (p.390). Although numerous Stalinists were interviewed, only one Trotskyist, John Williams, is mentioned as an oral source (p.393) despite the fact that Ann Keen, Jock Haston, Roy Tearse and Bill Davy were all in the land of the living. Croucher fails to mention that Bill Davy became a member of the Revolutionary Communist Party or that Mr. Justice Cassels was of the opinion that Davy should have been in the dock instead of the witness box. He seems to be unaware that the apprentices called as prosecution witnesses all supported the R.C.P. leaders, as did Tom Trewartha of the Barrow strike committee. In view of all this it is impossible to endorse his judgement that

"a certain amount of clerical help had been provided, but on the whole the R.C.P.'s influence had been marginal" (p.237).

14. C.f. n. 12, above.
15. *A Victory for Labour!*, pamphlet published by the Anti-Labour Laws Victim' Defence Committee, London (n.d., but September 1944 on internal evidence), p.7.
16. Croucher, op. cit., pp. 235-6; Bornstein and Richardson, op. cit., p.118.
17. Hugh Brannan, 'Tribute to the 'Bevin Boys', in *The New Leader*, 5th February, 1944, p.5.
18. Quoted in *Truth about Trotskyism*, Marx House Educational leaflet no. 3, n.d. p.1. C.f. "T.U.C. Backs Bevin's Plea to Deal With Trouble Makers", in *The Daily Worker*, 6th April, 1944.
19. Ann Keen, interview with Sam Bornstein, February, 1974. These raids were made in as punitive a manner as possible, to intimidate the party and its supporters. Millie Lee was subjected to a strip search, gloated over in the public press (*Daily Mail*, 6th April, 1944), the houses of members totally unconnected with the Tyne dispute were visited (e.g. that of Gerry Healy), and some 1200 documents were seized. C.f. J. Gale, 'The Press Witch Hunt', in *Workers Press*, 6th November, 1975, p.8. This article is one of a series that appeared in that newspaper on the whole case in November, 1975, and cannot be neglected by any serious inquirer. It would be a considerable contribution to working class history if the series were reprinted in pamphlet form.
20. Herbert Morrison, 'The Trotskyist Movement in Great Britain', W.P. (44), 202, 13th April, 1944.
21. "Two Arrested Charged in Secret", in the *Sunday Dispatch*, 9th April, 1944; "Strike Charge: Man and Woman Accused of Conspiracy", in the *Daily Express*, 10th April, 1944.
22. Op. cit., n. 19, above.
23. Op. cit., n. 19, above.
24. 'The Strike Wave in Britain and the English Trotskyists' in *Fourth International*, vol. v, no. 4, April, 1944, p.100.
25. "Trotskyist in Court Today", in the *News Chronicle*, 27th April, 1944; "Trotskyist Chief Under Arrest", in the *Daily Mail*, 27th April; "New Swoop on Trotskyists", in the *Evening News*, 27th April, 1944.
26. 'Daily Herald Reporter', "Police Used Third Degree", in the *Daily Herald*, 20th August, 1944. It came out at the trial that it had taken 24 hours and four sittings to get the statement out of Davy by the police, and that he had not been informed of his rights, or cautioned, that they threatened him with arrest and jail, and asked who would give him a job when he came out.
27. Jock Haston, Interview with Al Richardson, 30th April, 1978.
28. "Conspired to Further a Strike", in the *Evening Standard*, 28th April, 1944; " 'A Frame-Up' Says Haston: Bail Refused in Strike Charges", in the *Evening News*, 28th April, 1944; "Four Trotskyites on Strike Charge Today", in the *Daily Sketch*, 28th April, 1944; "Trotskyites' H.Q. Again Raided", in the *Daily Telegraph*, 28th April, 1944.
29. Minute no. 7, War Cabinet Meeting of April 3rd (War Cabinet 43(44)), as cited in J. Gale, "War Time Cabinet Discusses Trotskyism", in *Workers Press*, 11th November, 1975, p.8.
30. Minute no. 3, War Cabinet Meeting of April 5th (War Cabinet Records 45(44)). C.f. J. Gale, op. cit., note 29 above, ibid.
31. J. Gale, op. cit., p.9.
32. "Riddle of Money Used to Foment Strikes: Yard Seeks Men Behind Trotskyists", in the *Daily Mail*, 8th April, 1944. C.f. J. Gale, "The Press Witch Hunt", in *Workers Press*, 6th November, 1975, p.9.
33. Hansard, vol. cccclxxxix, April 18th - May 12th, cols. 1061-8. C.f. "Our Comrades Without Bail", in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. v, no. 22, May, 1944, p.4.; J. Gale, "Conspiracy Unmasked: The Morrison Memorandum", in *Workers Press*, 12th November, 1975, p.8; Bornstein and Richardson, op. cit., p.119; M. Foot, *Aneurin Bevan*, London, 1966, p.392.
34. Hansard, vol. 399, April 18th - May 12th, col. 1150. C.f. Ted Grant, "Bevin Defends His Anti-Labour Laws", in *Socialist Appeal*, vol v, no. 22, May, 1944, p.3 and J. Gale, "Conspiracy Unmasked; The Morrison Memorandum", in *Workers Press*, 12th Novem-

- ber, 1975, p.8; On Pritt's attitude, c.f. D.N. Pritt, *Defence Regulation 1A(a); Analysis and Criticism*, N.C.C.L. pamphlet, July, 1944, p.10.
35. J. Gale, "Conspiracy Unmasked: The Morrison Memorandum", in *Workers Press*, 12th November, 1975, pp. 8-9.
 36. 'Strike Crisis', in *The Daily Worker*, 6th April, 1944.
 37. Marx House, *Truth About Trotskyism*, 'Education Leaflet No. 3'.
 38. 'Trotskyist Organisation', in *World News and Views*, vol. xxiv, no. 17, 22nd April, 1944; *Documents for Congress* (a collection of the principal political statements issued by the C.P. between July 1943 and August 1944 for the C.P. 17th Congress), p.39; *Daily Worker*, 19th April, 1944.
 39. J.R. Campbell, *Trotskyist Saboteurs*, leaflet of the 'Daily Worker League', reprinted from the *Daily Worker*, 10th April, 1944.
 40. "N.C.C.L. Refuses to Defend Civil Liberties", in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. v, no. 23, mid-May, 1944; E. Silverman, 'The Newcastle Case', in *Left*, no. 96, October, 1944, p.224. C.f. D.N. Pritt, *Defence Regulation 1AA: Analysis and Criticism*, N.C.C.L. pamphlet, July, 1944, p.4; "Any attempt to sow dissension between the armed forces..... and organised workers..... in connection with strikes or anything else is the gravest possible injury to civil liberty and to every other national interest". For a good summary of the contents and implications of the whole pamphlet, c.f. R. Black, *Stalinism in Britain*, London, 1970, pp. 183-5. On the ban on the use of halls, c.f. J.B. Stuart, 'The Fusion of the British Trotskyists; The Attack Against the New Party; Immediate Perspectives and Tasks', in the S.W.P. *International Bulletin*, vol. iii, no. 1, June 1944, p.10.
 41. *An Appeal to the Workers at De Havillands*, 16th April, 1944, leaflet issued by 'The Hendon local of the R.C.P.'.
 42. "Our comrades Without Bail", in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. v, no. 22, May 1944, p.4.
 43. Gillie Sams, Letter to Roy Tearse in prison, 23rd April, 1944.
 44. Gillie Sams, Letter to Mrs. R. Tearse, 20th June, 1944.
 45. John McGovern, *What the Independent Labour Party Stands For*, I.L.P. pamphlet, n.d., pp. 25-6.
 46. "I.L.P. Leaders' Bold Challenge to Government", in *The New Leader*, vol. xxxvi, no. 6, 15th April, 1944; c.f. 'Our Political Correspondent', "I.L.P. Helps Trotskyists", in *The Daily Worker*, 8th April, 1944.
 47. "Broad Defence Committee Formed", in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. v, no. 22, May 1944, p.1.; "1A(a) Vicious Weapon for Reaction", in *The New Leader*, vol. xxxvii, no. 11, 20th May, 1944, p.4.
 48. *The New Leader*, 24th June, 1944; 'Anti Labour Laws Defence Committee', in 'May Day 1945 and the Industrial worker', *Bulletin of the Clyde Workers Committee*, p.5.
 49. Ben Francis, "Bevin May be Called in Case Against Trotskyists", in *The Daily Worker* 19th May, 1944; "Bevin as Trotsky Witness?", in *The Daily Mail*, 19th May, 1944; "Maxton Put on M.P. List as 'Idiot' ", in *The Daily Express*, 13th June, 1944. Maxton's work for the Defence Committee was to be his last great service to the working class. He died on July 23rd, 1946, after an illness of over six months.
 50. C.f. the photograph of p.2. in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. v, no. 23, Mid-May, 1944, p.1; Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back*, London, 1982, p.119.
 51. 'Letters from the Imprisoned Comrades', in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. v, no. 22, p.2.
 52. Jock Haston, Interview with Al Richardson, 30th April, 1978. The date of the 'commemoration meeting' would be August 21st, 1944.
 53. 'Our Comrades in the Witness Box', in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. vi, no. 2, July 1944, p.4.
 54. Op. Cit., n.53 above, p.2; c.f. *A Victory for Labour!* pamphlet issued by the Anti-Labour Laws Victims' Defence Committee', (undated, but to be placed in September 1944 on internal evidence), p.5. Davy joined the R.C.P. after this, and became a highly successful trade union militant. He was still leading strikes in the Manchester area in the 1970's.
 55. Op. cit., n.53 above, p.2; "£500 Gift to Strikers", in *The Evening News*, 20th May, 1944; "Trotskyists Live on Strikes, Say Apprentices", in *The Daily Worker*, 22nd May, 1944.

56. Op. cit., note 53 above, pp. 2 and 4. C.f. J. Gale, 'The Trial', in *Workers Press*, 7th November, 1975, p.9.
57. 'City and County of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne Summer Assizes: Rex v Lambert Heaton Lee, Rawlings Tearse, James Ritchie Haston and Angel Rosalie Keen: Summing up', Monday, 19th June, 1944 (Stenographic report).
58. "Miners' Leader Says Regulation is Unnecessary", in *The Daily Worker* (late edition), 20th April, 1944.
59. 'At Home', in *Left*, no. 92, June 1944, p.121.
60. "1A(a) Threat Against Shotts Miners", in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. vi, no. 5, mid-August, 1944.
61. 'The Strike Wave in Britain and the English Trotskyists', in *Fourth International*, vol. v, no. 4, April, 1944, p.99.
62. 'Judgement in the Tyne Strike Case', in *The New Leader*, vol. xxxvi, no. 31, 7th October, 1944, p.3; 'Why Trotskyists Won Appeal', in the *Daily Worker*, 28th September, 1944; 'Strike Trial Judgement', in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. vi, no. 6, October 1944, pp. 1 and 4.
63. "800 Glasgow Workers at Defence Meeting", in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. vi, no. 6, October 1944, pp. 3-4; Roy Tearse, Interview with Al Richardson, 6 July, 1978.
64. "Forward for the Repeal of 1A(a)", in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. vi, no. 5, September, 1944, p.4. On Maxton's rôle, c.f. John McNair, "Tyne Strike Victims Win Appeal", in *The New Leader*, vol. xxvi, no. 26, 2nd September, 1944, p.1.
65. "Our Comrades Released: Great Victory for the Working Class", in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. vi, no. 5, September 1944, p.1.
66. 'Judges' Summing Up', in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. vii, no. 6, October, 1944, p.4.
67. H. Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism*, London, 1963, p.227.
68. "Lessons of the Victory: New Labour Defence Organisation Needed", in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. vi, no. 5, September 1944, p.4.
69. E. Silverman, 'The Newcastle Case', in *Left*, no. 96, October, 1944, p.225.
70. F. Rowe, 'Britain's Young Citizens', in *Socialist Appeal*, no. 27, July, 1946, p.2.
71. "He Fights for Coal As He Fought in Spain", in the *Daily Worker*, 15th September, 1942.
72. Bannerji (1895-1967) wrote several articles for *Socialist Appeal* and *Workers International News* under the pseudonym of Hakim Mirza. C.f. 'After Thoughts on the Dissolution of the Comintern', in *Workers International News*, vol. v, no. 6, February, 1944, pp. 10-13 and *Fourth International*, vol. v, no. 6, June, 1944, pp. 180-3. He rejoined the Communist Party at the time of the Korean War.
73. This same phenomenon, of ex-Stalinists joining the Trotskyist movement and creating a 'third period' atmosphere in their ranks, had the same result after 1956 when the Healy Group split from the Labour Party under the label of the Socialist Labour League and the 'Keep Left' Young Socialists, producing the bizarre sect we know of today.
74. J.S. George, 'Labour Party and By-Election: No Aid From Political Crutches' (Letter to the Editor), in *The Neath Guardian*, no. 1276, 2nd February, 1945, p. 5; c.f. J. McHugh and B.J. Ripley, 'The Neath By-election, 1945: Trotskyists in West Wales', in *Llafur*, vol. iii, no. 2, Spring, 1981. We are greatly indebted to this excellent essay for much of what follows.
75. McHugh and Ripley, p.70, and Bornstein and Richardson, *Against the Stream*, London, 1986, p.238.
76. J. Lawrence, 'South Wales' Organiser's Report', internal document of the R.C.P., 18th November, 1944; 'South Wales Defence Committee', in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. vi, no. 9, December, 1944, p.2.
77. Jock Haston, Interview with Al Richardson, 30th April, 1978.
78. McHugh and Ripley, op. cit., p.68.
79. "End the Slander! Wage a Clean Political Fight", leaflet issued by Heaton Lee, p.1.
80. R. Ryan (Mrs W. Hunter), 'On the Neath Front', in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. vi, no. 12, Mid-February, 1945, p.1; McHugh and Ripley, op. cit., p.71 and n.25; J. Lawrence, 'Challenge to Public Debate' (Letter to the Editor), and "Revolutionary Communists Open Campaign", in *The Neath Guardian*, no. 1276, 2nd February, 1945, p.5.

81. "The anti-war and anti-Soviet policy of British Trotskyists, through which they try to split the allied front, and sabotage and hinder the mobilisation of the people and the nation's resources in the fight to defeat Fascism brands them not merely as 'slanderers' but as enemies of the workers and traitors to their country" - A. Thomas and J. Maunder, Letter to the Editor, in *The Neath Guardian*, no. 1277, 9th February, 1945, p.5. C.f. McHugh and Ripley op. cit. p.72.
82. *To the Workers of Neath: A Reply to a Cowardly Slander*, leaflet issued by the West Wales District of the Revolutionary Communist Party, p.2; C.f. J. Lawrence "Alleged 'Frame-Up' at Moscow Trials" (Letter to the Editor), in *The Neath Guardian*, no. 1278, 16th February, 1945.
83. R. Ryan, 'On the Neath Front', in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. vi, no. 12, Mid-February, 1945, p.1. C.f. Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back*, London, 1982, p.81 and fig. facing p.67
84. *Communist Reply to Trotskyist Challenge to Debate*, leaflet of West Wales Communist Party.
85. A. Thomas, *Trounce the Trotskyites*, West Wales C.P. pamphlet, as quoted in McHugh and Ripley, op. cit., p.73 and n. 34. C.f. also, "Communists Support Labour Candidate", in *The Neath Guardian*, no. 1288, 27th April, 1945, p.1.
86. McHugh and Ripley, op. cit., p.73 and n.34.
87. *Haston For the Miners*, election leaflet published by Heaton Lee.
88. H. Finch, "A Frog Without a Pond", in the *Internal Bulletin* of the R.C.P., July, 1947, pp. 5-6; 'Trotskyites Meeting', in *The Neath Guardian*, 4th May, 1945, p.1.
89. Frank Ward, Interview with Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, 27th Sept. 1980.
90. Jock Haston, Interview with Al Richardson, 30th April, 1978.
91. McHugh and Ripley, op. cit., p.73.
92. Op. cit., n. 91, n.1. p.76.
93. Jock Haston, Interview with Al Richardson, 30th April, 1978. These numbers are at some variance with those of only six given in McHugh and Ripley, op. cit., pp. 75-7, and some of Haston's recruits may have been contacts before the by-election began. But c.f. J. Jones, 'The Killer in G.C.G.', in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. vi, no. 12, mid- February, 1945, p.2; "R.C.P. Grows in Wales", in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. vii, no. 10, mid-July, 1945, p.2. A different assessment of the intervention of the R.C.P. in Neath appears in I.G. Hunter, 'The Ten Years for the Locust Reconsidered: The Legacy of the R.C.P.', September, 1981, p.14.
94. Frank Ward, Interview with Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, 27th September, 1980.
95. "R.C.P. to Contest Bootle in Municipal Election", and W. Landles, "Herbie Bell Campaign Under Way", in *Socialist Appeal*, Supplement, mid October, 1945, pp. 1 and 4. Bell had a long and honourable history in the working class movement, which went right back to the fraternization of the British and German troops in no-man's land in Christmas 1915. C.f. R. Challinor, *The Origins of British Bolshevism*, London, 1977, p.142 and n. 54, p.149.
96. *Report of the 43rd Annual Conference of the Labour Party*, London, 11th-15th December, 1944, pp. 113-8 (esp. 114-5).
97. C.f. Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back*, London, 1982, pp. 126-32.
98. Op. cit., n. 97, especially pp. 131-2.
99. 'Party Notes', in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. vii, no. 10, Mid-July, 1945, pp. 2 and 4.
100. *Labour to Power With a Majority*, R.C.P. leaflet.
101. John Goffe, Interview with Al Richardson, 18th May, 1978.
102. P. Frank, 'The British Trotskyist Movement and the International', part i, August, 1955, in *Fourth International* (duplicated magazine), September, 1955, pp. 7-8.
103. 'Resolution on the Enlistment Tactic Submitted by W.I.L.', p.2.
104. Editorial Notes, 'Labour in Power', in *Workers International News*, vol. vi, no. 1, October, 1945, p.3. (Their emphasis).
105. 'A Bridge to the Masses', in *Revolutionary Communist Policy*, pamphlet containing the resolutions of the Second National Congress of the R.C.P. 4th - 6th August, 1945, pp. 27-8. (emphasis as in original).

106. Early in the War Pierre Frank had tried to argue for the dropping of the slogan "Labour to Power" completely from the Trotskyist platform, and in 1945 had argued for entry into the I.L.P. (P.B., R.C.P. 'The Real Situation in Britain', in the *Internal Bulletin* of the R.C.P., March 1947, pp. 14 and 39). It is thus not possible to accept his view in hindsight that "the International immediately declared itself for the orientation into the Labour Party" (P. Frank, 'The British Trotskyist Movement and the International', part ii, October, 1955, in *Fourth International* (duplicated magazine), n.d. pp. 22-4).
107. J.B. Stuart, 'The Fusion of the British Trotskyists; the Attack Against the New Party; Immediate Perspectives and Tasks', in the *Internal Bulletin* of the S.W.P., vol. iii, no. 1, June, 1944, pp. 12-13. C.f. Margaret Dewar, Letter to Hugo Dewar, end of March, 1945: "Recently another American was here, whose line was: the R.C.P. should not bother about the L(about) P(arty). Their task is to work inside the I.L.P., perhaps to officially apply for affiliation (i.e. to ask for affiliation for the I.L.P.). Healy is supposed to be very much in favour of that".
108. P(olitical B(ureau), R.C.P., 'The Real Situation in Britain', in the *Internal Bulletin*, R.C.P., March, 1947, p.39.
109. C.f. above, pp.81-2
110. Left Fraction, 'Resolution on the Labour Party Tactic', 21st February, 1944, presented to the R.S.L. - W.I.L. Fusion Conference, p.1. Naturally, the Left Fraction was unimpressed with Haston's candidature at Neath, describing it as "a stunt and no mistake" which would "do much to embarrass the faction workers inside the L(about) P(arty)", who would "either have to defend Haston and court expulsion or else repudiate him - and open the perspective of a split as a result". When the R.C.P. leadership ordered the Leicester Group of the Left Fraction to leave the Labour Party they regarded it as the "purest provocation on the part of Haston-Grant". (Bill Eastwood, Letters to Alex Acheson, 29th January and 19th April, 1945).
111. Political Bureau, R.C.P., 'An Open Letter to the 'Left' Fraction', in *Internal Bulletin*, new series, no. 1, p.11.
112. 'Brief Notes on the History of the Left Fraction', p.3.
113. C.f. pp.44 above.
114. Editorial, 'Labour Party Conference', in *The Militant Miner*, new series, no. 29, October-November, 1944, p.1.
115. P(olitical B(ureau), 'A Criticism of the Article 'Labour Party Conference' in the *Militant Miner*, October-November 1944, by G. Russell', in *Internal Bulletin*, new series no. 1, January, 1945, pp. 4-5.
116. 'Left Fraction Statement to conference', p.1.
117. 'Left Fraction Conference Document No. 1 1946' (Reprint) p.1.
118. Op. cit., p.2.
119. J.L. R(obinson), 'Further Material on the Expulsions', p.1; T. Mercer, Letter to Sam Watson, 18th June, 1949, in *The Voice of Labour*, no.25, July 1949, p.10.
120. John Robinson, Interview with Al Richardson, 3rd June, 1978.
121. *Brief Notes on the History of the Left Fraction*, p.4. C.f. P(olitical B(ureau), R.C.P., 'The Real Situation in Britain', in the *Internal Bulletin*, March, 1947, p.40. Five others were expelled by the Right Wing leaders of Glasgow Labour Party in October 1949, their sole crime being to give out a leaflet at a meeting addressed by Aneurin Bevan - "More Expulsions in Glasgow", in *The Voice of Labour*, new series no.2 (27), November 1949, pp. 7-8.
122. *Socialist Outlook*, vol. 11, no. 9, September 1950, p.5. Mercer's name subsequently appears in the early issues of Healy's *Labour Review*. He is now retired and living in South London.
123. Roy Tearse, Interview with Al Richardson, 6th July, 1978.
124. C. Van Gelderen, 'Towards Entry: A Contribution Towards the Pre-conference Discussion', in *Internal Bulletin*, R.C.P., 22nd August, 1946, p.9.
125. Jock Milligan, *Payment By Results*, leaflet of the Militant Workers Federation.

126. "Blitz Workers Form Action Committee", in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. vi, no. 8, November, 1944.
127. H. Atkinson, 'Organised Workers Must Control Vigilante Committees', in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. vii, no. 10, mid-July, 1945, p.3.
128. John Byrne, Interview with Al Richardson and Sam Bornstein, September, 1976.
129. "Irish Militant Deported", in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. vi, no. 12, Mid-February, 1945, p.4.
130. 'The Strange Case of Brother Milligan', in *Workers Fight*, new series, no 2, mid-January, 1940, p.3.
131. Roy Tearse, Interview with Al Richardson, 6th July, 1978.
132. '90,000 Building Workers March', in *Socialist Appeal*, mid-October, 1945, p.4.
133. Op. cit., n. 132 above, and J. Johns, "National Demo. for Building Workers", in *Socialist Appeal*, November, 1945, p.1; "Brother Milligan Reinstated", p.4. Alf Loughton was a supporter of the group of Wicks and Dewar inside the I.L.P. C.f. p.70 above.
134. 'National Organisational Report, 1945-6', Special Conference Issue of *Party Organiser*, vol. 1, no. 8, September, 1946, pp. 8-9. Immediately afterwards the Communist Party tried to discredit the Building Workers Campaign Committee by accusing them "on the same old lines of having said things which Lord Haw-Haw used to say on the German radio, etc, etc." - Margaret Dewar, Letter to Hugo Dewar, 17th January, 1946.
135. C.f. Bornstein and Richardson, *Two Steps Back* London, 1982, pp. 140-1.
136. 'Editorial Notes: The New Awakening', in *Workers International News*, vol vi. no. 2, November, 1945, p.37.
137. Martinson had joined the National Unemployed Workers Movement and the Communist Party early in the thirties, and had functioned as Chief Marshal of the Lancashire Hunger Marchers. In 1935 he had been jailed for riots in protest at William Joyce's meetings in Bootle. In 1936 he went to Spain to serve in the International Brigade, was captured by Franco's forces and released two years later. He was discharged from the army for political activities in 1942. C.f. "R.C.P. to Contest Bootle in Municipal Election", in *Socialist Appeal*, mid-October, 1945, p.1.
138. "London Strikers Duped by Dictator", in the *Daily Mirror*, 10th October, 1945.
139. J. Deane, "Support the Dockers in Struggle for a Living Wage", in *Socialist Appeal*, mid-October, 1945, pp. 1 and 4.
140. (London) *Star*, 10 October, 1945.
141. G. Healy, 'A Balance Sheet of Perspectives', in *R.C.P. Conference Documents*, 7th August, 1946, p.2.
142. 'National Organisational Report 1945-6', in *Party Organiser*, Special Conference issue, vol. i, no. 8, September 1946, pp. 8-9.
143. Anonymous (Brian Biggins), *Fourth International: A History of Bolshevism 1918-48*, n.d., p.35.

Chapter Six

A New World and Old Conflicts, 1944 - 1947

When an organisation ceases to make further impact upon the outside world its energies turn inwards, and conflicts, whose proper solution lie in society outside, become internalised. At the same time, as a gap widens between the revolutionaries and the rest of the working class, another opens up between the programme and its immediate applicability. Then discussion shifts from the application of the programme to conflicts in which revolutionaries are engaged, to the strategic terms of the programme itself, and ultimately its validity. From attempting to change the world, Marxists are thrust back into discussing it, and commenting upon its processes from the outside. As the periphery drops away, the dialogue between the revolutionary group and the class as a whole comes to an end, and is replaced by a dialogue merely within the group itself. Then hard and fast factions form, and the pent-up energies of the members result in a destructive factional conflict. Political differences reach the level of personal recrimination, tactical differences become raised to the level of immutable principles, discussions among comrades become replaced by conflicts with enemies. In the case of the problems that beset the Revolutionary Communist Party in the period of this chapter, we must recall that a secret clique already existed, waiting for issues to take up against the leadership, which stemmed from the methods by which the International Secretariat had acted over the fusion of 1944. But the emergence of the Healy group was a symptom, and not the cause, of the decline of the British Trotskyist movement of this time. As the British Section of the Fourth International, the R.C.P. was in far closer touch with the problems of the World Party than the W.I.L. had ever been. The crisis of British Trotskyism was only the local expression of the crisis of the world movement, which failed totally to comprehend the changes in the international situation beginning as early as 1943, and has failed utterly to come to terms with them since. For it was really a crisis of programme, as much as of political organisation, the beginning of the age of Trotsky's

epigones. The theory and practice of the Fourth International as it emerged from the Second World War contained within it all the seeds of its future decay, and accelerated what was already a downward spiral.

In the case of the R.C.P., with its successful record of industrial agitation, it is not at all surprising that the preliminary conflict was to rage over what appeared to be a purely industrial problem - that of the threat of unemployment and the strategy to be adopted to deal with it. But very soon it was discovered that the differences raised related to the very question of the programme, and the nature of the new world order.

By Autumn 1944 it was obvious that the end of the war was in sight, at least as far as Europe was concerned. Lay-offs had already begun in the Engineering industry, as competition with the far larger production units in the United States' arms industry took its toll. The older generation looked back at the unemployment of the 1920's, the 'world fit for heroes', and the even worse situation in the thirties. Large-scale dislocation was expected as the industry switched over from war to peacetime production. Men whose years on the dole had come to an end with full war production, and women who had gained new confidence as wage-earners, expected to be thrown straight out of their jobs. No-one knew the exact impact upon the job market of the demobilisation of millions of workers in the armed forces. As an article in *Socialist Appeal* commented, "the plain fact is that even before the war is officially ended, mass unemployment already begins to show itself". As a preliminary suggestion it proposed that there should be "no transfers to alternative employment except with the consent of shop committee", which would also control all questions of work, hours, etc.¹ But since the Trotskyist movement, both in Britain and abroad, had long expected large scale economic problems at the end of the war, it was obvious that this would not be sufficient, and that a comprehensive strategy would be required. A month later the outlines of such a strategy were sketched out by Roy Tearse in the *Industrial Bulletin*. Here he grappled with the problem that the E.C. of the A.E.U. was suggesting a return to the status quo before the war, which would mean the sacking of dilutees, many of them women, who had come into industry during the war, and the retention of skilled men. Those who had been unemployed before the war would also be returned to the dole queue. This would split the workforce and undermine effective resistance to the employers' offensive. On the other hand, it was useless to oppose unemployment in a purely propagandistic fashion, as if this failed, sackings would go ahead anyway, and the employers would make a point of victimising their main antagonists in the trade unions. The solution he arrived at was that the first line of resistance was to oppose all redundancy, using the suggestion of worksharing with full pay, a sliding scale of hours and wages, etc., as advocated by the *Transitional Programme*. Then, instead of allowing dilutees to go, as well as to preserve the unions, he proposed that "insofar as we are faced with actual sackings today, we demand that this be on the basis of the closed shop", in other words, that

“non trade unionists should go first, skilled or otherwise”. In places such as docks, where there was a closed shop but a good deal of casual labour, transfers were to be done “on the basis of established membership”, i.e. the seniority rule. To preserve workshop organisation, the strategy was to “campaign for trade union control of any transfers or dismissals through the medium of shop stewards or factory committees”.² A further statement from the Political Bureau explained the thinking behind this position, that it was “an appendage of our *Transitional Programme*” in order to avoid the employers’ attempts to maintain “unorganised workers in the plants at the expense of the organised workers”, on the basis of “ ‘nons first’, and after that, dismissals on the basis of seniority”. The main point was stated as:

“One important tactical consideration is constant while capitalism remains: *the defence and extension of the mass trade union organisations* - at least until they are replaced by more revolutionary and more widespread forms of organisation.... despite their shortcomings, the trade unions are class organisations, and have to be defended from capitalist attack. *Simultaneously they have to be defended from being undermined by the more backward strata of the unorganised workers, and in particular that strata which refuses to be organised*”.

In fact, this was no more than a summary of normal working class and trade union activities, adapted to the expected conditions of 1944-45. As they observed, “those comrades who disagree with these demands have the duty to counterpose better ones.”, but that “to turn one’s back on these daily problems, hold up our hands in horror and say: ‘we have our programme, if we can’t get that we won’t contaminate ourselves’, is to replace Marxian tactics with sectarian phrases”.³

The appearance of this policy led to a heated discussion at the following London aggregate of the group, in which the Minority, led by Gerry Healy, attacked it as an abandonment of the *Transitional Programme*, and began to elaborate a criticism. “A real struggle against redundancy is essentially a *political struggle*”, they maintained, and it was the task of the R.C.P. to lead both organised and unorganised workers: “we must not and dare not discriminate when redundancy arises”. They gave several hypothetical examples, such as a strike for a closed shop, which brought ‘nons’ into the union, and then another strike to get them to leave in order to enforce seniority, and a factory in which the ‘nons’ were only 5%, but more dismissals were required, where accepting “nons first” would establish a precedent for sacking the rest. They concluded that “we might find ourselves participating in a strike on behalf of one group of trade unionists trying to force another group out of the factory”. The task of the party was not to follow trade union practice pure and simple:

Herein lies the error of “nons go first” in the struggle against

redundancy. It tends to maintain the division of the workers along trade union lines in a fight on a political issue, when the aim of the Party should be to unify them on the widest possible basis.

To follow the Political Bureau's policy would thus be to "destroy, by an opportunist concession, the whole basis of our political attitude towards redundancy".⁴

Their own policy would be to try to widen the basis of a purely trade union battle against redundancy into one involving other layers:

"In the coming period our party must constantly strive to broaden the basis of shop stewards' committees in the direction of factory committees, which are in essence embryo soviets.....

For instance, in a given area, where there are factories with strong shop stewards' committees functioning, we may find equally strong housewives' and tenants' committees. On these committees, by the very nature of their origin, there must inevitably be a large number of non trade unionists. Housewives, in particular, are not catered for by a trade union. The task of our party here would be to unite all these committees with the shop stewards' committee on the basis of the transitional demands. Our perspectives in the coming period must be to hold ourselves in readiness to set up ad hoc organisations representing the fighting masses".

Following this logic to its conclusion, they rejected the need for any tactical position within the single trade union committees. "Minimal demands" were "entirely subordinate" to transitional demands, and there was "no other answer to either redundancy or unemployment apart from the *Transitional Programme*".⁵

But this conflict, started between the two groupings, now began to take in the rest of the party, where workers with experiences from different industries were able to contribute from widely differing working class practices and traditions. It ceased to be a set piece confrontation from entrenched positions, and showed how the British Trotskyists were beginning to distill the collective experiences of sections of the working class into the elaboration of a revolutionary programme. Class questions were moving from the abstract to the particular, and the transitional approach was starting to come to life in the conditions of the Labour movement.

Sid Bidwell provided the following:

"I enter this discussion because a great deal can be gleaned from the practical experiences of the highly organised railway workers, who have had in their hands since 1921, workers' control of transfers, redundancy and dismissals. This formed part of the demands fought for and won in the magnificent strike struggle of the railway workers in 1919.....

I accept wholeheartedly the premise of the P(olitical) B(ureau) in

facing up to the problem of a redundancy at *every* stage of the struggle and in linking up the issue of redundancy with the necessity for constantly fighting for the 'closed shop'.....

In putting forward the demand 'nons' first, *when our comrades are faced with actual sackings, and then the operation of seniority on the job*, we are simply adopting one of the tried and tested methods of defensive struggle fashioned by the workers wherever they have built strong organisations.....

We ceaselessly point out that the solution to unemployment is the sliding scale of hours with a guaranteed living minimum wage. *It has never been propagated that the tactic or demand 'nons' first and seniority second, is a substitute for the Transitional Programme.....*

The principle of seniority has been fought for and won by the railway workers - last to come, first to go. But there has always been a deep sympathy between the regular and irregular employee to the extent that, in many instances, the management has been forced to place more workers in the 'regular' category. If a worker, for any reason, failed to join the Union, his 'case' was not presented, and he was the first to go. Here is the practical application of 'nons' first, and who is to argue that this was not a manifestation of workers' control?.....

In the railway industry, we have long fought for the principle of seniority in our promotion and redundancy agreement. Most of the minor battles - isolated strikes and 'slow marches' in various depots - have been on this very question in recent years. Since it is argued that the demand for 'seniority' will result in weeding out young militants, *it is significant to note that in the forefront of these battles have been the young workers; because they feel as a whole the boss must be prevented from exercising discrimination in selecting workers for upgrading, down-grading and dismissal. They know that without workers' control of movement, there will be wholesale victimisation of the prominent class fighter. The present agreements and Union policy render it impossible to victimise a worker without raising a storm from Land's End to John O'Groates''.*⁶

The anthracite miners, recently recruited to the R.C.P., also took this attitude, from their own very different experience:

"The 'Seniority Rule' has been established in the Anthracite area only after years of terrific struggles, which culminated in a 7 weeks' stoppage in all the Anthracite area in 1925, because of the victimisation of one man, Wilson. Police in hundreds were drafted into the area. Grave clashes and riots took place in Ammanford. Many miners were imprisoned. Since then, the hard-boiled Welsh coal owners have not dared to oppose the principle of seniority.....

In a capitalist state, the principle of the 'First Man In - the Last to

go out' *stands as a citadel against the bosses' hope to eliminate the class conscious individuals from industry.* Because of this rule, I, for example, have always been a Bolshevik, emphasising the policy of Marx and Engels and this philosophy to the best of my ability, and to the boss I am a thorn, allowed to function only because of this 'rule'.....

And in conclusion, with the deepest respects to you comrades, I am to state that the branch will accept the decisions of the C.C. in all matters: but beg you to *leave seniority to us miners*, at any rate until I trust when the power of the means of production makes it unnecessary in a Socialist Britain".⁷

Bob Condon, on the other hand, thought that experience in the Anthracite area differed from that in the Steam Coal areas of Wales, and that in any case seniority and 'nons first' were "opposed to each other":

"Firstly we shall look at the fate of seniority in the Steam Coal area of the Hills where mass unemployment was present. This area constituted Aberdare and Merthyr; and Rhondda had even greater numbers. At the end of 1926 men were victimised, regardless of seniority. For a while after 1926 workers could fight individually or suffer. The union was impotent. When workers tried to stand on their rights by the seniority rota the management just sacked them and sent down to the dole for another batch. Workers who had long periods of unemployment were glad of any job, and queues hung around the pits all day and every day, hoping for a start. A worker thinks twice about demanding his rights when there are fifty men waiting for his job....."

"..... in my opinion..... mass unemployment throws seniority out of the window. Seniority is a system of rota that only works smoothly during periods of comparative capitalist ascendancy on the economic field....."

Seniority is a spontaneous trade union demand that only develops during periods of capitalist upgrowth or during fairly normal conditions. During periods of crisis and defeat of the workers it becomes impotent to arrest the downward pressure of the workers. In fact, during conditions of mass unemployment, the fight for seniority is strangled and workers let customs slide....."

" 'Nons first' policies will divide the workers who are in the unions from the vast mass of non-unionists. Now any miner knows that on fundamental issues the 'nons' come out on strike with the unionists. The 'nons' are not scabs but just workers who are lackadaisical or who just take a subjective militant attitude to the reigning reformists in the leadership. We have the duty to draw the 'nons' into a united struggle. In Cannock we kicked out and sacked the reformist traitors in the union. On this basis five thousand 'nons' joined the Union in less than six months. Our slogan was 'Traitors First'....."

"In Hirwan at the Tower Colliery the bosses rooted out the militants and replaced then with work-hungry men from the valleys. The miners at the Tower Colliery referred to the T.U. lodge as the 'White Guards'. I myself was the first worker to root out the traitors at the Tower and establish a revolutionary leadership. We had no Seniority to protect us, still carried out our Bolshevik tasks and finally won the lodge. The winning of the non-unionists was an essential task we had to achieve. We did it....."

The preservation of the unions and the achievement of a revolutionary leadership is a political task, it is a question of very *urgent policy*. The advancing of the 'Nons First' shows a petty-bourgeois underestimation of the workers' ability to rise to political heights. It shows lack of faith and knowledge of the working class. To put 'Nons First' forward as a tactical method of defending the unions in a period of mass unemployment is to completely betray the workers".⁸

Ann Walker took the same attitude, looking at things from the point of view of the women who made up such a high proportion of the non-trade unionists:

"..... the vital issue now appears to be the use the bosses are making of the situation to lower wages, break trade union organisation, and divide the workers into antagonistic sections, men and women, craftsmen and dilutees, trade-unionists and non-trade unionists. Our task is to give a lead to the unifying forces in the working class, by pushing the issues which bind the class together, and opposing those which tend to split it. Thus we can use the attacks of the bosses to forge the weapon against them. The Editorial of the November *Industrial Bulletin* came out against the sacking of dilutees, but supported the demand that non-Trade Unionists should go first. I think that this demand can only have the effect of splitting the workers, and we should oppose it. It is not just a matter of getting rid of scabs, the Shop Stewards can look after that if we demand shop stewards' control of transfers. There are vast numbers of unorganised workers who are potential militants, women, youth and unskilled men, i.e. the most oppressed layers of the class. Our duty to turn towards them is emphasised in the *Transitional Programme*. They can and will be brought into the organised movement, but not by throwing them out on the streets....."

"Another very important demand, arising directly from redundancy, is that of equal pay for women. The Convenor of an aircraft factory in our district stated recently that; women sacked from there were being placed by the Manpower Board in 'sweat shops' where they were paid 7½d. to 9½d. an hour, and these shops were being given contracts for jobs formerly done by skilled labour.

He demanded that they be forced to pay the district rate, or have their contracts removed. But the issue will go further than this, the district rate for women is too low to be any safeguard against their undercutting the wages of men. They must be paid the same as men".⁹

The fact that the discussion involved the whole group, and brought together the experiences of militants from all over the country, was a very healthy feature, and it encouraged the participation of many who did not habitually go into print. If there were any clear lines of division between the two groups, it can be said that the Healy Minority included those younger militants who had got engineering jobs during the war, and thus stood to suffer first if the apparatus of the union were to be used to maintain craft privileges. The Majority position was argued by full-timers who had not been in industry at all for some time, some of them with a craft background, although they enjoyed the support of most of the active trade unionists outside the A.E.U. The way the Birmingham branch came to accept the policy of the Political Bureau is well described by Percy Downey:

"Actually, we didn't take kindly to it at first, we thought it was the wrong way, a kind of negative approach to the problem - accepting an unpalatable approach to anyone out of work - I mean, whether they were trade unionists or non-trade-unionists. It's a question of their political development. As revolutionary socialists we claim that the only solution to the problem of unemployment is the abolition of the capitalist society. When you are faced with unemployment you protect the Trade Unions, the institutions of the Trade Unions.

We came round, after a heated discussion, to accept the fact that you defend the workers' organisation, and where you get some industries, where it is 100%, like the steel industry, and it has always operated - even in the twenties - it is 'Last In - First Out'. Maintaining organisational discipline of the workers, the organisation decided who was out, and protected the militants in the union. If the employers were allowed to hire and fire, then the militants would go first. In the 'Nons First' this protected the organisation".¹⁰

The resolution finally agreed on at the Second Congress of the R.C.P. from 4th-6th August 1945, was along the lines of the original suggestions of the Political Bureau and Roy Tearse:

"Unemployment provides a favourable opportunity to the employers to attack the Trade Union organisation in the workshop by ridding themselves of the militants and the Trade Unionists generally and retaining the unorganised and scab labour. In preparation for this we raise the demand now for the Closed Shop and 100% Trade Unionism, insofar as the workers have been unable to prevent sackings by the workers through their Shop Stewards' Committees on

the basis of 'Nons First' and the operation of a Seniority Agreement".¹¹

In the end, of course, the whole conflict was transcended by the progress of events. The unemployment in the engineering industry was a conjunctural phenomenon not reflected elsewhere in the economy. In other trades, particularly building, there was a shortage of labour. No large scale unemployment followed the war in any case, only a slow and sluggish growth that delayed the removal of wartime controls, and mass unemployment was not an option open to the incoming Labour government.¹²

Yet it would be a mistake to dismiss the controversy as an ephemeral one, for whilst in form it was an argument over redundancy, in substance it was a programmatic discussion. The proposals supported by the two sides were deeply bound up with their understanding of the current phase of the class struggle, and ultimately the nature of the post-war world. If immediate crisis was, on the order of the day, creating slump and mass unemployment, the views of the Healy Minority would have been the correct ones. "We maintain that this discussion is on programme and not on tactics", wrote Harry Finch on behalf of the Minority, and he went on to elaborate a catastrophic perspective:

"Redundancy is the beginning of mass unemployment. Throughout the P(olitical) B(ureau) statement the 'Nons First' and 'Seniority' policies are put forward, not only as a stop gap for a period of redundancy, but also for the coming period of mass unemployment. The Aircraft Industry will be reduced to 10% staff after the war. Under such policies as 'Nons First' and 'Seniority' not only will 'Nons' go but thousands of militant trade unionists. Then, if the Shop Stewards controlled sackings, Shop Stewards will be sacking Shop Stewards.....

The P.B. comrades (although they speak to the contrary) only see 'Nons First' being applied to a few hundred workers - they do not see the significance of the approaching period, where thousands upon thousands will be thrown on the streets.....

It must be stressed again and again that redundancy and mass unemployment are manifestations of the 'crises of capitalism', that nothing but drastic measures can alleviate them. The *Transitional Programme* does this".¹³

From this viewpoint, Finch was perfectly logical in calling for the debate to be settled, not only in a national conference, but to be discussed internationally, for programmatic differences were present. In not taking the same attitude, the Political Bureau was being less consistent. Their document had expected "many ebbs and flows in the tide of battle before the class enemy will be finally defeated", and had even toyed with "the possibility of a post-war boom lasting a year or two".¹⁴

Jimmy Deane had also issued the timely warning that whilst "Marxists base themselves on general tendencies, the relation between the industrial and political development is in no way direct or immediate", and that "only vulgar Marxists pursue ideas of 'economic determinism' ".¹⁵ Yet the final conference resolution continued to affirm that "the period of the world economic crisis from 1929 onwards, with its unemployment queues of over 3 million, will appear a rosy picture in comparison with what the working class faces in the next period".¹⁶

In effect, whilst both minority and Political Bureau continued to follow the W.I.L. perspective that "without the breaking down of the national barriers and the expropriation of the means of production, a new era of barbarism and decay would set in on the Continent of Europe",¹⁷ in practice the Political Bureau was drawing back from this, and Finch was quite correct to highlight the differences.¹⁸ For the perspective that they had both inherited was Trotsky's own. Before his death he held that "the present army of unemployed can no longer be regarded as a 'reserve army' because its basic mass can no longer have any hope of returning to employment; on the contrary it is bound to be swelled by a constant flow of additional unemployed",¹⁹ and in consequence he believed that "all countries will come out of the war so ruined that the standard of living will be thrown back a hundred years".²⁰ It is true that this was Trotsky's concept of the whole era, and in no way was it implied that cyclic fluctuations would be precluded, or that the progress of the class struggle would not affect the development. But if the immediate post-war perspectives were to be of economic collapse on such a scale the Political Bureau's fall-back situation would certainly not apply.

The capitalist world order survived a series of potentially ruinous shocks in the period from 1943 onwards. In July 1943 Mussolini fell from power, and was replaced by the administration of Field Marshal Badoglio, which negotiated a cease-fire with the Allies in September. Large scale strikes broke out in Northern Italy, and factory committees and even soviets emerged in the industrial cities. Whilst Badoglio's government came to terms with the Allies in the South, his authorities disarmed the working class in the North, enabling the Germans to take over while the Allies obligingly bombed the cities from the air. All over Italy the working class parties emerged blinking into the daylight, with real mass support. They were quite uncorrupted with the reformism of similar parties in the rest of Europe. The Communist Party had gone underground before Stalin's rise to power, and Togliatti had to import Stalinism into it from Moscow when he arrived in April 1944. Immediately it came out in favour of a coalition government with the monarchists, which left the Socialist Party on its left for some time. A long period of collaboration in government was required before the threat of workers' revolution subsided with the influx of U.S. aid.

The liberation of France by the Allies was accompanied by a railway strike and armed uprisings from the Resistance, in which the Communists

played the major part, while in some cities the local committees nationalised private property without reference to Paris. But the Communists went into De Gaulle's Government, and they were only ejected some years later under Ramadier after they had failed to control a strike wave. The Resistance was disarmed, and bourgeois democracy restored.

In Greece the Communists virtually controlled the nation when the Germans withdrew, having administered the country districts for some time. As soon as Britain's General Scobie arrived, he ordered them to disarm, and launched a full scale attack on them. Under orders from Moscow they gave in, though some rank and file guerillas continued to resist. The attempt of the Monarchists and British to annihilate the Greek Communist Party completely, prolonged the Civil War for some years, in the face of gross betrayal from Moscow.

The strategy of the Western Allies in the areas they conquered was to head off the revolutionary threat by creating regimes of bourgeois democracy, in which they were assisted by the Socialist and Communist Parties, which alone retained the confidence of the working classes. Alarmed at the depth of the revolutionary wave, and calling to mind the crisis that followed the First World War, they pumped in economic aid to stabilise the regimes they had created, and withdrew their military administrations as rapidly as they could. As the material destruction of the war had created an almost unlimited market, the preconditions for the following prolonged boom had already been laid down, as had been the conditions for the continuation of bourgeois democracy.

In Eastern Europe, it was Stalin's original intention to try the same tack. When the Red Army conquered the countries originally ruled by, or allied with Germany, coalition governments were set up, with Monarchists in Romania, ex-Horthyites in Hungary, and bourgeois politicians wherever such existed. Communists were carefully placed in the Ministries of the Interior to keep hold of the police forces, and anarchists, peasant parties and left Socialists were smashed with some ruthlessness, particularly in Bulgaria. But apart from in Czechoslovakia, there had not been much of a native bourgeoisie in Eastern Europe with which Russia could do a deal in the first place. German, or occasionally French, capital had dominated these states long before the war, and the national bourgeoisie was only embryonic. The effect of German conquest had been largely to wipe out these native capitalists, eliminating the middle man, so to speak, and replacing him with direct imperialist exploitation. Hitler had all but destroyed the bourgeoisie of Eastern Europe long before Stalin decided to finish the process. The regimes erected on Russian bayonets had little basis in the economies of their countries. Only when it became obvious that capitalism could only be recreated in Eastern Europe by American aid did the Russians decide to have done with these 'Heath-Robinson-style' creations and institute full Stalinist systems, and Stalinist regimes emerging from peasant guerilla warfare in Yugoslavia and Albania, in the course of

the war, set the pattern for the expansion of Stalinism in the 'Third World' ever since. Stalinism emerged immensely strengthened from the war, and Communist Parties enjoyed great prestige, even where they held no real power.

Marxists are not clairvoyants, nor do they approach the future with the assurance of *Old Moore's Almanack*. Perspectives depend for their development upon the class struggle, and the will of the masses to fight back and the courage and foresight of the revolutionaries are as much material factors in the conflict as are the strength of economies or the size of armies. Trotsky refused to make hard and fast prophecies about the state of the post-war world:

"It would be a vain task to attempt, at this time, to predict the course of the war and the fate of its various participants, including those who still cherish the illusory hope of remaining outside the catastrophe. It is given to no man to survey in its entirety this vast arena and turmoil of infinitely complex material and moral forces. Only the war itself will decide the destiny of the war".²¹

Nonetheless, certain lines had to be sketched out. If the Allies won, Trotsky expected a "new and ten times worse edition of the Peace of Versailles", in which a "debased and exhausted Europe" would become the "bankrupt debtor of its transatlantic saviour".²² In any case, the survival of bourgeois democracy was not likely:

"The regime of bourgeois democracy appeared on the basis of liberal capitalism, that is to say, free competition. That epoch is now far in the past. The present monopoly capitalism, which has decomposed and degraded the petty and middle bourgeoisie, has thus undermined the ground under bourgeois democracy. Fascism is the product of this development. It does not come at all from without.

In Italy and Germany, Fascism conquered without foreign intervention. Bourgeois democracy is dead not only in Europe but also in America".²³

Nor would Stalinism prove any more durable. "Revolution in the West will deprive the Kremlin oligarchy of its sole right to political existence", he explained: "if Stalin survives his ally, Hitler, it will not be for long".²⁴

These expectations repeated, in a slightly modified form, those entertained by Lenin and Trotsky about the period of the Russian Civil War. Either the revolution would spread, and the Soviet Union would break out of its isolation, or the counter-revolution would triumph, and the Russian state would be overthrown. With his 'revolutionary optimism', Trotsky, quite naturally, came down on the side of the first alternative. The stalemate that neither he nor Lenin had expected in 1921 was repeated on a higher plane in 1945.

A repetition of the history of the inter-war years was not a pleasant

prospect to contemplate, and Trotsky did not make a habit of dwelling on it. However, at times he was forced to reckon with the possibility:

“Naturally, if a new war ends only in a military victory of this or that imperialist camp; if the war calls forth neither a revolutionary uprising nor a victory of the proletariat; if a new imperialist peace, more terrible than that of Versailles, places new chains, for decades, upon the people; if unfortunate humanity bears all this in silence and submission - then not only Czechoslovakia or Belgium but also France can be thrown back into the position of an oppressed nation (the same hypothesis may be drawn in regard to Germany). In this eventuality the further, frightful decomposition of capitalism will drag all people backwards for decades to come. Of course, if this perspective of passivity, capitulation, defeat, and decline comes to pass, the oppressed masses and entire peoples will be forced to climb anew, paying out of their sweat and blood, retracing on their hands and knees the historic road once already travelled”.²⁵

It was only very slowly that the Fourth International began to face up to its responsibilities to give a clear lead to the workers of Europe when it was obvious that these conditions were not going to come about. As the sections in Asia were caught up in the colonial conflict, and those in Europe were in illegality, in essence this task devolved upon the American S.W.P. As Felix Morrow explained at the time:

“We are living under extraordinarily favourable conditions at this moment, in contrast to the situation of our European comrades. We are a legal party, we have access to broad areas of information denied to our comrades in the underground, we have a measure of leisure of thought without the terribly harassing conditions which dog our European comrades. Thanks to our good fortune, we may have been placed in the position of being, in essence, the trustees of the Fourth International.....

Our resolution must serve, in reality, as the determining resolution of the Fourth International”.²⁶

The American Trotskyists and the International Secretariat that depended upon them, met the urgent task of reassessment with an incredible complacency and a suffocating orthodoxy. Jean Van Heijenoort's attempt to get a discussion going on the European resistance was evaded and suppressed;²⁷ Goldman and Morrow's objections to the European perspectives of the October 1943 Plenum of the S.W.P. were not even published in the *Internal Bulletin* for over a year, on the excuse that the discussion could not be conducted while all the protagonists were in prison.²⁸

For nearly a decade the American S.W.P. and its co-thinkers tried to cling to the letter of Trotsky's prognoses, as each in turn was invalidated by

the fresh turn of events. If reality proved otherwise, then so much the worse for reality!

This tendency reached the most absurd lengths, even to the extent of denying that the Second World War was over. *Fourth International Magazine* greeted the end of the war in Europe with the headline "There is no Peace",²⁹ and Wall Street was held to be preparing for the Third World War as early as the spring of 1946.³⁰ James P. Cannon explained the reasoning behind these pronouncements:

"Trotsky predicted that the fate of the Soviet Union would be decided in the war. That remains our firm conviction. Only we disagree with some people who carelessly think that the war is over. The war has only passed through one stage and is now in the process of regroupment and reorganisation for the second. The war is not over, and the revolution which we said would issue from the war in Europe, is not taken off the agenda. It has only been delayed and postponed, primarily for lack of leadership, for lack of a sufficiently strong revolutionary party".³¹

"The Trotskyist movement would become a madhouse if it followed Cannon's line", observed Felix Morrow.³²

Moreover, the formation of bourgeois democratic regimes in Europe was ruled out from the start:

"The decay of capitalism and the acuteness of class conflicts, forbids another extended period of bourgeois democracy for war-torn Europe. While interim bourgeois-democratic regimes may be set up here and there as by-products of uncompleted revolutionary movements, they must, by their very nature, prove unstable and short-lived..... the economic preconditions for an extended period of bourgeois democracy have disappeared.....

The Trotskyist parties everywhere have the basic duty to expose and fight against the illusion that stable bourgeois-democratic regimes, which have lost their material foundation, can be restored in Europe.....

Roosevelt and Churchill understand that it is not in the cards to establish stable 'democratic' capitalist governments in Europe today..... The choice, from the Roosevelt-Churchill point of view, is a Franco-type government or the spectre of the Socialist Revolution".³³

The defenders of this incredible scenario described bourgeois democracy as "incompatible with the continued existence of capitalism in Europe", and in ironic vein dismissed the possibility of any such development:

"I have heard and read it bruited about that there is going to be a tremendous revival of democratic illusions among the masses because the younger generation has not gone through the school of

parliamentarianism, that it must first go through this 'body of experience', until it is able to shed democratic illusions. What inability to understand the meaning of events and to sense the mood, the aspirations, the feelings of the masses!"³⁴

Two years after the end of the war they were still going on about a "real danger of Fascism in Europe".³⁵

Nor was their assessment of the power of the Soviet Union any more realistic. Mesmerised by Trotsky's prediction that the Soviet bureaucracy could not outlast the war, they believed it to be in a state of chronic weakness:

"Despite Stalin's crimes and betrayals, the Trotskyists everywhere urge the masses to work and fight for the victory of the Red Army against the military forces of imperialism.....

The victories of the Red Army have inspired the masses of Europe and provided a powerful impulse to their revolutionary struggle.....

The Soviet Union will emerge from the war a devastated country. Millions of the flower of manhood are dead, wounded or missing. A great section of its industry is destroyed, and innumerable cities as well as great sections of the countryside lie in ruins. Far from having increased its independent strength, under Stalin the Soviet Union has been debilitated and today is weaker than ever in relation to the capitalist world".³⁶

The first substantial challenge to this world view came from inside the American S.W.P. itself, in the arguments of Felix Morrow and Albert Goldman:

"The disappearance of certain economic preconditions does not also mean the disappearance of political preconditions. The existence of workers' parties, leading great masses, is a precondition of bourgeois democracy in our epoch, and is a precondition which does not disappear because economic preconditions of bourgeois democracy have disappeared.....

*There is always a way out for the bourgeoisie, Lenin taught us, in criticising those who attempted to predict the end of capitalism as a function of the economic process. The bourgeoisie will today, just as in 1918, use bourgeois democracy with equal facility with other methods..... the choice (of a revolution or a Franco-type government) is false, because the two choices are not the only ones to which capitalist strategy is limited. Roosevelt-Churchill are unfortunately much more flexible than are the writers of the sub-committee resolution".*³⁷

The danger of such an eventuality was all the more serious because Stalinism was being strengthened throughout Europe, was able to repeat

what it had done in Spain on a continental scale, and was in no way as weak as the S.W.P. believed:

“..... the draft resolution erred in minimising the Stalinist danger; we must recognise that the victories of the Red Army have temporarily strengthened the prestige of Stalinism; and we must, therefore, include in the resolution a warning of the very real danger of Stalinism to the European revolution.....

At present, because of the victories of the Red Army, the prestige of the Soviet Union has grown tremendously but unfortunately it has been misappropriated by the parasitic bureaucracy. The power and ideological influence of Stalinism have been strengthened temporarily. As a result, we must recognise a serious danger to the coming European revolution. The Stalinist bureaucracy will either help the capitalist democracies in the attempt to crush revolution by force or, if the revolution assumes too great a sweep to be crushed, it will attempt to gain control of it in order to save its own rule. What Stalin has done in Spain he will try to repeat in other countries of Europe”.³⁸

The Goldman-Morrow-Heijenoort tendency put forward a series of transitional slogans to counter the threat to the revolution from the Allies: for the overthrow of the remaining monarchies in Europe; for the convening of constituent assemblies; for agitation for full legality for working class parties, and other demands. All of this criticism was either evaded or rejected. In the end Goldman joined the Workers Party of Max Shachtman, and Morrow was expelled.³⁹ The American S.W.P. was left free to carry its unworkable perspectives into the young and weak sections of the Fourth International in Europe, assisting their ideological disarmament in the face of a situation that could have been foreseen, if perhaps not avoided. “The S.W.P. was in a position to study and clarify the tasks of the movement”, observed Morrow: “had the S.W.P. done this work, it might have saved the European movement years of groping, errors, and painful reorientation”.⁴⁰

One of Herbert Morrison’s more far-sighted remarks, at the time of his secret report to the cabinet on the Trotskyists, had been that the R.C.P. “under its present leadership” would have been unlikely to “submit to any attempt at dictation” from the leaders of the Fourth International,⁴¹ and they had their own doubts about some of the details of the scheme for some time. The main documents of the discussion in the American group were reproduced for circulation inside the R.C.P. and encouraged disquiet. “I was very interested”, recalls Bert Atkinson, “because among the American comrades who took this position was Felix Morrow, who I had a very high opinion of, so I was interested in it”.⁴² But in fact the leadership of the W.I.L. and later of the R.C.P. had been groping towards a new outlook some time earlier, on a more empirical basis. As Roy Tearse recalls:

“I think that we were the first - although belatedly - we were the first

to recognise this. You see, we had always been fed on the notion that Trotsky argued that the war would produce a revolutionary situation. We used to quote people like..... the eminent Labour historian G.D.H. Cole. He wrote an article round about that time, that Europe would be reduced almost to seventeenth century level. He argued this sort of thing, and we used to quote it as well, and when the war ended, don't forget, the capitalist states were in one hell of a mess. In France there was no cohesive government. In Germany there was no cohesive government. In Eastern Europe you had the situation, before the Red Army came in, of the development of soviets. As the Red Army was coming in, soviets were being developed. It was the Marshall Plan that came to the rescue. It was really two things that saved capitalism in Europe. One was the Stalinists, with their attitudes and policies, and the other was the Marshall Plan. What we had not foreseen were two things; one, that capitalism - American capitalism in particular - had learned from the First World War, when they squeezed the German economy, and two, that American capitalism was capable of doing something about it - which they did. It was this we hadn't foreseen. It was Felix Morrow (who was outlawed in the S.W.P.) who wrote one of the most significant articles on the problem of the development of democracy in Europe, and it was Morrow, I think, of the entire International Trotskyist movement who saw this question clearer than anybody.

But really what happened with us, and I think we have to be quite honest about it, is that events just hit us over the head. But we did, at least, recognise it, although there is nothing to be particularly proud of about that, because - as I say - it was events hitting us over the head, not us tackling events and making a clear analysis of them".⁴³

It was only slowly and painfully that the British Trotskyists shook themselves free of the sterile formulae of the American S.W.P. and tried to work out a viable theory. Their first departure was to dismiss the notion that a post-war slump would automatically lead to a right wing regime. They admitted that "in the event of the failure of the working class to show a way out of the crisis" there would be a "terrible social and political reaction" in Britain, but that this "could only arise after the defeat of an inevitable revolution".⁴⁴ A year later Ted Grant was beginning to examine the Italian experience and draw the appropriate lessons:

"The subjective conditions for the revolution are not yet present. Instinctively and almost automatically the Italian working class has taken the correct steps on the road to workers' power. But the Socialists and Stalinists are already preparing to betray the movement by turning it into the channels of bourgeois democracy".⁴⁵

The next step was to generalise this outlook on a European scale. "In the

absence of experienced Trotskyist parties, with roots and traditions among the masses", ran the W.I.L.'s October 1943 conference resolution, "the first stages of the revolutionary struggles in Europe will most likely result in a period of Kerenskyism or Popular Frontism".⁴⁶

As events became clearer, in the Summer of 1945, Grant began to deepen the insight he had gained. "A bourgeois democratic phase in the next immediate stage of the evolution of European society is most likely in the Western states", he concluded, and whilst denying its "stable character", he defined it as "in essence, not the democratic revolution, but the bourgeois counter-revolution".⁴⁷ A later statement describing it as the "bourgeois 'democratic' counter-revolution of the period of the decline of the bourgeoisie" showed how the analysis was applicable to Western Europe as a whole, at least for the foreseeable future:

"A 'democratic' phase in Europe will result not from the objective need for a phase of democratic revolution but because of the sell-out of the old workers' organisations. Had Stalinism and Social Democracy stood on the programme of Marxism, there would have been the possibility of the transition, immediately, to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Only the weakness of the revolutionary party and the counter-revolutionary rôle of Stalinism has given capitalism a breathing-space. Seeing that it is virtually impossible to rule by the method of fascist or military dictatorship, the bourgeoisie has prepared to switch, for the time being, to the bourgeois democratic manipulation of their Stalino-reformist agents. *This does not constitute a democratic revolution but, on the contrary, a preventative, democratic counter-revolution against the proletariat*".⁴⁸

Not surprisingly, the Political Bureau of the R.C.P. came out in support of the American Minority, and agreed that "developments since had completely vindicated Morrow in his main contentions".⁴⁹

Meanwhile, the American S.W.P. was carrying its outworn theories into the Fourth International through the International Secretary, Sherry Mangan and Sam Gordon. According to its analysis, the economic crisis of capitalism had "the characteristics of permanency", the "gaping holes" of the economy had become "veritable cataracts", with "its whole structure" teetering over "a precipice".⁵⁰ The Europeans agreed wholeheartedly. It was "the revolutionary action of the masses" that had destroyed "the last possibilities for the bourgeoisie to restore the economy which has been ruined and dilapidated by the war",⁵¹ there was "no reason to believe that we are entering upon a new period of stabilisation and development of capitalism", and the countries of Europe would "remain on a level approaching stagnation and slump".⁵² It followed from this that the possibilities for bourgeois democracy were limited to "an artificial and extremely temporary solution", and that a "relatively long intermediate 'democratic' period" was impossible.⁵³

These false theories were already having a damaging effect upon the weak sections of the movement in Europe. The French Section, taking seriously the point that bourgeois democracy could only be an interlude, refused to come out of illegality for some time after the Allied troops arrived, fearing to expose its militants to the repression that was expected.⁵⁴ Pierre Frank, who had still not taken out proper papers a year later, even generalised the theory of the I.S. to prove that France was not only under Bonapartist government under De Gaulle in 1946, but had been under continuous Bonapartism since 1934, and asserted that "democratic counter-revolution" was an "expression devoid of content".⁵⁵ Apart from the fact that a Frenchman should have known that it was the "democratic counter-revolution" that had overthrown the Paris Commune, it was necessary for Ted Grant to remind him that the Weimar Republic and a series of such regimes had followed the First World War. "A sobering appreciation of the last two years", wrote Grant, will tell us that (a) here we have an unachieved proletariat revolution; result (b) unstable bourgeois democracy, assembly, elections, constituent, bourgeois-democratic constitution".⁵⁶

The first opportunity afforded the R.C.P. to challenge these prognoses was an International Pre-Conference held in conditions of great secrecy early in April, 1946 in Paris. After the circulation of a preliminary resolution in December 1945 there was total silence, and neither the sections nor the members of the International Executive Committee were informed of the date or place of the venue. At the last minute about a dozen sections were contacted and the rest of the international movement was ordered to print an identical newspaper release about it on 'D-Day'.⁵⁷ To the conference went Jock Haston for the Majority and John Archer as interpreter, and Gerry Healy and John Goffe attended for the Minority. Bob Armstrong represented the Irish Group, and Sherry Mangan was in the chair. As the German organisation, the I.K.D., refused to recognise the authority of a meeting convened in this way, Jock Haston was unwise enough to propose that it should formally constitute itself as a Congress of the Fourth International, and this was accepted by a unanimous vote.⁵⁸

The Draft Resolution repeated all the errors of its previous statements and the ideas of the American S.W.P. In addition to denying the possibility that there would be a period of bourgeois democracy, or that a boom was possible, it struck out wildly at those who could even contemplate such eventualities:

"Only the superficial capitulationist petty bourgeois can see a denial of our revolutionary perspectives, in the fact that the war did not give rise to revolution in Europe, either during the conflict or immediately afterwards, that the German revolution did not occur, that the traditional organisations, in particular the Stalinist parties, have enjoyed a new a powerful revival".⁵⁹

The statement even denied that Russia had come out of the war greatly

strengthened. According to it, Russia was at “the beginning of a period which will decide the final destiny of the regime established by the October Revolution”,⁶⁰ and that “while appearing to enjoy power greater than that ever attained in the past”, the Bureaucracy had “entered into the most critical phase of their existence”.⁶¹ So weak was Russia, holding down, as it was, all Eastern Europe by armed force, that a counter-revolution could even come about peacefully, “in the near future, even without military intervention, through the sole fact of economic, political and diplomatic pressure of American and British Imperialism, and its military threats”.⁶²

The R.C.P. delegation was aghast at this thesis of peaceful counter revolution, contradicting, as it did, practically everything Trotsky had written on the subject. It was “a totally false evaluation of the Soviet Union”, since “the paralysis of the world revolution through its agencies, the Stalinist Parties, leads to a temporary strengthening of the position of the Stalinist bureaucracy”, and that “without a revolution in Europe and Asia, the bureaucracy will most likely maintain its position in the Soviet Union, and even further entrench it in the next immediate period ahead”.⁶³ As for the possibility of a slump, the R.C.P. delegation produced evidence that the economy in Europe was, in fact, on the verge of a pronounced boom:

“The present crisis and low level of production is not the economic crisis as understood by Marxists in the classic sense. It is a crisis of ‘under production’ arising from imperialist concentration of productive forces for war and from war production itself. It reflects itself in the lack of agricultural goods - just the opposite of an economic crisis of capitalist over-production as understood by Marxists.....

For the second time, in a generation, capitalism had been enabled to gain a new breathing space.

The theory of spontaneous collapse of capitalism is entirely alien to the conceptions of Bolshevism. Lenin and Trotsky emphasised again and again that capitalism will always find a way out, if it is not destroyed by the conscious intervention of the revolutionary party which, at the head of the masses, takes advantage of the difficulties and crises of capitalism to overthrow it.....

Particularly in view of the fact that this crisis is not a crisis of over-production and that the capitalists are not being attacked in Western Europe by mass organisations but receive the direct assistance and support of Social Democracy and Stalinism, *a cyclical upswing is inevitable.....*

*All the factors on a European and world scale indicate that the economic activity in Western Europe in the next period is not one of ‘stagnation and slump’ but one of revival and boom.*⁶⁴

All the R.C.P. amendments were rejected at the Conference, and the

absurd perspective of Bonapartism was maintained at great length by Pierre Frank and others. But before the proceedings could go further, unforeseen circumstances intervened. "We met in great secrecy", recalls Haston, "shortly after the Liberation of France, over a café, and we locked all the doors, and nobody was allowed to go out for any purpose whatsoever. You could shit your pants, and you still couldn't get out of that room whilst the conference was taking place, and the second day we met in better circumstances where the doors weren't locked in that form - over the café, in a very nice, wide open café room on the first floor, in actual fact. We were halfway through the morning session when suddenly the doors burst open".⁶⁵ Here John Goffe takes up the story:

"Unfortunately, this large room was next door to the proprietor's office. The proprietor, apparently, was scared out of his wits by hearing various speeches on revolutionary tactics being conducted in the next room, and sent for the police. There was a loud bang on the door, and in rushed half a dozen policemen with sub-machine guns, and arrested the lot of us, and took us down the stairs, and on each step on every side of the staircase, or every other stair, was a policeman armed with a sub-machine gun. We were taken down and kept overnight in the Conciergerie".⁶⁶

The short confinement had its funny side, as Haston was able to remember it:

"We thought that it must be the G.P.U. agents, and we thought we were going to be slaughtered, and the first thing they wanted to know was if we had any arms. The only guy to have a gun was Sherry Mangan, and that wasn't loaded - it struck me as being the biggest bloody joke of the century! The idea is, if you are going to carry a gun at all, you want something in the bloody thing!

Anyway, we were all picked up and carted down to the headquarters of the Paris Police, and we were kept there overnight in one big room. There were thirty of us, as a matter of fact, and we were very badly fed, and French bread at that time was dung. I was suffering very badly from ulcers. I couldn't eat any of the stuff, and eventually I had a row with the Chief of Police who was brought in to see me, and I argued with him, actually, that they were starving us. We had plenty of money to pay for food - why couldn't I have someone bring some food in for me? He was a Communist Party member - a Stalinist - the Chief of Police at that time, and he said, well, he was going home for a meal then, and he would bring me back something from his home. Which he did, which was a big tin of American chicken - so he was doing alright! We were expecting to be expelled. John Archer was there as my translator. I was the leader of the British delegation, and he was a delegate as well. Bob Armstrong

was there..... I remember specifically Bob Armstrong, who spent all the time there entirely, looking for tobacco..... Pierre Frank didn't have any papers at all, and Pablo didn't have any papers. We all expected to be expelled, but the following day at lunchtime we were all released - all of us! Those of us who were without papers were given papers, and we finished the conference".⁶⁷

This inglorious conference was even misrepresented afterwards. Although the R.C.P. had only gained four votes for its amendments, those sections of the resolution that dealt with the impossibility of bourgeois democracy and the possibility of peaceful counter revolution in Russia were replaced with statements that came halfway towards the R.C.P.'s position before the resolution appeared in print.⁶⁸ "Everything was organised in the dark, by leaders interested in assuring themselves of hegemony in this gathering", commented Trotsky's widow.⁶⁹ The entire process by means of which they arrived at their final printed statement was aptly described by Roy Tearse:

"This form of activity; to defend a position with great vigour, drop it overnight, and adopt another idea, is, comrades, the method of eclecticism; to defend an idea with great vigour, and when events refute it, to adopt another on the basis of new experiences, without explanation, is precisely, comrades, the method of empiricism".⁷⁰

Perhaps their treatment, at the hands of the Paris Police, had finally convinced them that the Government was not 'Bonapartist' after all! What was worse was that a leadership of such incapacity should have been allowed to legitimise themselves as a result of such a conference at all.

As the rift deepened between the R.C.P. leadership and the International Secretariat it was obvious that the differences would not be restricted to the future of bourgeois democracy and the nature of the boom. Trotsky's perspectives for the end of the war were a coherent whole, with each part related to and depending upon the next. Now an entirely new evaluation of the Soviet Union was called for, since not only had Stalinism played the major part in the "bourgeois counter revolution" in Western Europe, but it had spread over and dominated the states of the East, which were rapidly being converted into small scale copies of its own social and political structure. It had been axiomatic in the Trotskyist movement that Russian policy was counter revolutionary. What was the movement to make of this export of revolution? Had Russia become an imperialist power? Why had the Bureaucracy not been overthrown in the course of the war? How could the revolution spread without overthrowing it? Was Russia no longer a temporary aberration, a crisis state, and had it become a new sort of society, a vision of the future?

It was Natalia Trotsky who, early on in the war, suggested that the slogan of the defence of the Soviet Union should now be dropped, since the defence of the European revolution, that was being strangled by it, was far

more important. When the R.C.P. delegates attended the Pre-Conference, they noted that the emphasis placed on Russia's weakness had led the conference to assert strongly the traditional view of the defence of the Soviet Union. As a result, they noted "the question of the defence of the Soviet Union, following from this analysis, is pushed to the foreground instead of being relegated to the background in relation to the "Defence of the European Revolution against Stalinism".⁷¹ The question assumed a very real form over whether the Trotskyists should demand the withdrawal of the Red Army from all the territories it was holding down, or justify the occupation by the need to defend a weakened Soviet Union.⁷²

It was Haston who raised the question of the reappraisal of the class character of the Soviet State:

"It is not a question of the workers' state being saddled with a hump on its back that is growing bigger. Such an organic analogy is useful only if properly understood. But when it leads comrades to *ignore* and *deny* the necessary conclusions of a class character, then it must be replaced by a more precise organic or social picture.....

The transfer of the means of production to the state, insofar as it does not lead immediately to socialist production and distribution, also transfers the functions of the capitalist to the state. *The elimination of individual capitals, and the competition and anarchy of individual production modify these functions to a considerable degree.* But the state is the controller of capital; it is the controller of money; it is the controller of the mass of commodities - the products of the working class; the state pays the wages of the worker; it hires him, fires him, and tells him what to produce and how to produce it, and where to produce it. *In all these functions* it occupies the same relation to the national economy as the individual capitalist occupies in relation to the single enterprise.....

Not only does the Russian *State* appropriate surplus value, but it extracts a bigger proportion of surplus value than is extracted from the workers by the capitalists in capitalist countries. Proof? Look at the rate of capital accumulation in any other part of the world. For years we have pointed to the fact that this is the most gigantic and rapid capital development in history.....

If one takes into consideration the historical tendencies towards statification on a world scale, and the fact that Russia's statification survived the test of a tremendous war, it seems theoretically correct to assume that there is no reason why a new capitalist class in Russia cannot arise and dominate the economic life of the country without destroying state property as such; but on the contrary, through investments in state bonds. If the present investment and inheritance trend continues, it is possible for state property to be transformed into juridical function, while in reality, a new class of money capitalists, of

rentiers who batten on the labour of the working class, have taken over the means of production".⁷³

Haston's reopening of the Russian question touched on one of the fundamentals of Trotskyism, and began an ideological ferment in the R.C.P. Bob Armstrong and Mattie Merrigan came out in support of the theory of "Bureaucratic Collectivism" as defended by Max Shachtman, and called for the R.C.P. to "circulate the main programmatic documents of the Workers Party among its membership".⁷⁴ They were supported by Bert Atkinson, who regarded the Soviet state as "an historic 'accident', a hybrid, a bastard social formation due to the drawing together of trends and influences the like of which the world is not likely to see again".⁷⁵ Rose Selner and Charlie Orwell, whilst denying that Russia was a workers' state, would not "attach any final nomenclature" to it but reminded the R.C.P. that Trotsky "never considered the defence of the Soviet Union as an end in itself", but as "part of the world struggle and strategically and tactically subordinated thereto", whilst pointing out that the "victorious Red Army entered Europe as the most reactionary force of our day".⁷⁶ Ygael Gluckstein, who arrived from Palestine in September 1946, was put up by the International Secretariat to argue against Haston for the Workers' State point of view, and was so impressed with his reasoning that in the course of the debate they changed sides. In the end the R.C.P. leadership came round to the original Trotskyist position, as Grant remembers it:

"It was necessary to make a thorough analysis of the situation of Russia; to go through the material of the great teachers - because that is the only way we can learn - to go through the material of Marx, of Engels, of Lenin, of Trotsky and in the light of what they had written to study again the phenomena that had taken place in Eastern Europe. Therefore, although the leadership of the R.C.P. had mistakenly considered that there was state capitalism in Russia now and in Eastern Europe, before deciding we made a reassessment. I myself spent months just going through the fundamental works of the movement, through *Capital*, the works of Lenin and Trotsky, the political works of Marx and Engels, to see what light they could throw on the situation. Tony Cliff..... came with the formal position of 'Workers' States'..... convinced..... in thorough discussions, that there was capitalism in Russia, and he put the ideas on paper. But as soon as we examined his material our hair stood on end, and we had been making this thorough reappraisal, and we came to the conclusion, on the contrary, that what we had here was a form of proletarian Bonapartism".⁷⁷

It followed, naturally, that what applied to Russia applied also to Eastern Europe, where the Russian army was still in occupation, widespread nationalisation was taking place, and one-party states were being set up on

the Russian model. Here, the International Secretariat was caught in a hopeless dilemma, for true to Trotskyist orthodoxy, it continued to maintain that the U.S.S.R. was a workers' state, but because of its counter revolutionary nature, denied that it could spread its property forms abroad. Ernest Mandel felt that "no one can doubt for a moment" that in Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria "capitalism continues", and that "we cannot, in any degree, equate the nationalisation to an "expropriation of the bourgeoisie", or to the destruction of capitalism, which Shachtman seems seriously to imply".⁷⁸ A May Day Message to the workers and peasants of Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia told them that "the victory of the proletarian revolution is impossible without a concerted struggle against the bourgeoisie, against the remnants of the semi-feudal castes, against the politics of the Communist parties who share the power with the representatives of these reactionary classes and subordinate all their actions to the directives of the Soviet bureaucracy".⁷⁹ But now that the lines were becoming clear, logic dictated the identity of the set-up in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union. If new states were capitalist, so was Russia; if Russia was a workers' state, so were they. The central committee of the R.C.P. drew attention to this anomaly, and demanded reappraisal:

"The C.C. notes that our own organisation, and especially the leading comrades, have failed as have all the other sections of the Fourth International, to examine and explain the social transformations taking place in these Eastern Countries, to establish the class character of the process, and especially to establish the *class character of the states that have come into being*. This is an indication of theoretical hesitation and indecision on the part of our International movement as a whole in the light of new and amazingly complicated social phenomena..... the C.C. requests that the I(nternational) S(ecretariat) issue a declaration with the purpose of initiating an international discussion".⁸⁰

But despite all pleas, such a re-examination was left to discussions in the separate sections: for nearly three years we had the spectacle of an international revolutionary leadership which did not know that a revolution had taken place in half a dozen different countries!

The discussion about state capitalism had a more immediate relevance to the British movement, for the Labour Government had just embarked upon its extensive series of nationalisations. Here again, it had been axiomatic in the Trotskyist movement that the Social Democrats always betray, and can never carry out their programmes once in office. The legislation of the Labour government brought a rude shock to these assumptions, as coal, the railways, and heavy steel passed into public ownership and the National Health Service and other forms of social insurance were set up. The discussions on statification in the Russian and Eastern Europe economies

suggested a link with what was going on in Britain, a phenomenon taking place on a world scale. As Frank Ward related:

“Jock was in a very indecisive mood about it. He really argued very strongly that we should re-discuss it and see whether or not the theory of ‘State Capitalism’ could be valid or not as a method of establishing one’s attitude towards the Soviet Union. But it was also taking place in a discussion about the nature of the nationalisation changes that were taking place in Britain itself, and to me it was possibly more important as a consideration that it could be a world historical trend, in which we are seeing Social Democracy playing a part in introducing something which could conceivably be called ‘State Capitalism’. I just came to the general conclusion that there could not be an animal - a political animal, or an economic animal - that could be so described. It seemed to me that at the end of the discussion it was pointless and valueless. It didn’t add anything to anybody, it just changed the two descriptive words ‘degenerated workers’ state’ to ‘state capitalism’....

If there was such a society, then it would be able to advance the development of the productive forces, on some sort of planned basis, forever. Now that could not be, on the old theories (it would) mean that there was no rôle for the working class to play. On the other hand, it could be, for such a system could only be formulated under the pressure of the working class, and in effect it was forced on the capitalist class by the pressure of the working class, and this would still leave the working class as the predominant movement in history. One can go back over those discussions, but for me the primary thing was that it arose from the British situation rather than the Russian. But other comrades took it rather from the Russian than the British situation.

But it was beginning to fit in with my own tentative theories, that if the developments in Britain kept on moving in the same direction, then it would be very difficult to describe that society as an unplanned society. I still think, as I thought then, that the major difference lay in the fact that a ‘statised’ society was capable of being planned was the dominant change from one society to another”.⁸¹

The resolution passed by the R.C.P. Conference on the 7th-9th September 1946, admitted that “Labour leaders have gone further on the road of carrying through their programme than we anticipated”, whilst describing “the method and form in which statification is being accomplished - compensation and without workers’ control” as “a compromise with the bourgeoisie as a whole”, “measures of state capitalism and not of socialism”. Such measures were a “step forward from *laissez faire* or monopoly capitalism”, but they showed “the increasing tendency towards

the fusion of finance capital with the state", which remained a capitalist state.⁸²

At a time when so many of the fundamentals of Trotskyism were coming into question it was obvious that the experience of Labour nationalisation would also have to be taken into account in a new world view. Bob Condon, as a miner's agent, had just encountered nationalisation, and took it to be different from both capitalism and socialism, because "it gives privileges and exploits, and is controlled by a new class of people, namely technicians, future technocrats". On a different basis from private capital, it would "not be restricted in its development". Since the working class was not ready to build Socialism, the real facts dictated that "the next few hundred years undoubtedly belong to the technicians", whom we must follow and "help to build a new world, and a new civilisation".⁸³ Russia itself was thus not going through a new "transitional stage", but was "following historical lines".⁸⁴ The resemblance of these ideas with those defended by James Burnham in *The Managerial Revolution* are all too obvious, and as the Political Bureau observed, "all the basic scientific socialist theory is to be thrown overboard after a month's experience of capitalist coal nationalisation".⁸⁵

But Condon had raised real questions about the evolution of capitalism, if not of the Eastern bloc, and a deeper examination of future trends was an urgent necessity. A starting point, according to Bill Hunter, was that there had been "no fundamental opposition from the bourgeoisie" to the nationalisations of the Labour Government: the programme of the Government was actually "in line with the development of capitalism, and the blows of the past two decades have forced large sections of the capitalist class to see the necessity of a greater statification". In carrying out its programme the Labour Government was "acting objectively as the most conscious section of the ruling class" as "a result of the general crisis of British imperialism".⁸⁶ It only remained to establish how far the process would go, and what would be its consequences. A document written by Jock Haston and passed by the Political Bureau for discussion attempted to sketch the outlines of such a theory. He described "the statification of the means of production by the capitalist state" as "the logical consequence of capitalist development"⁸⁷ and tried to foresee its long-term implications:

"Everything that centralises the means of production, centralises the working class. State capitalism brings this concentration to the highest stage possible under the capitalist system.....

State capitalism and the workers' state are two stages in the transition period from capitalism to socialism. State capitalism is the extreme opposite of socialism - they are symmetrically opposed, and they are dialectically united to one another.....

Capitalist statification brings into being all the material elements necessary for socialism. The only thing which is needed to transform society from state capitalism to socialism is the revolutionary activity

of the workers. State capitalism poses the problem of the social revolution in its most immediate and acute form, but it does not solve it. The solution is the smashing of the capitalist state and its substitution by the workers' state".⁸⁸

However, the document implied that "state capitalism" could develop smoothly from private capitalism, and left the impression that a capitalist state could take over the whole economy. A later statement corrected it. There were no easy transferences under capitalism, and the class struggle inevitably cut across the process. It was thus impossible that *the entire means of production* in state hands would leave the economy capitalist, since "the conflict between *the social mode of production and private* (i.e. capitalist) *appropriation* is the root from which all else flows":

At the stage when the state takes the entire means of production into its hands, whether or not capitalism still remains in other countries, the capitalist relations are transformed into their opposites. A new society exists".⁸⁹

It was the hopes raised among the working class by the nationalisation programme of the Labour Government that were responsible for the lack of success of the R.C.P. during this period, and ultimately its stagnation and disintegration. As strikes dwindled almost to nothing, and the Militant Workers Federation proved stillborn, the Party was left without a perspective for the future. As economic recovery began to return, and the Government began to press on with its reforms, the illusions of the working class in the Labour Party continued to rise. It was inevitable that a way out of the R.C.P.'s impasse would be sought in a return to the entrism tactic.

The first to raise the question on a general scale was Felix Morrow, who drew attention to the fact that "our cadres everywhere are tiny and that the great masses, insofar as they are politically active, are following the Communist and Socialist parties". Adding ruefully that the question should have been posed two years earlier, he asked whether "we enter one of the reformist parties, constitute a faction in it and work in the direction of a split out of which we will come with sufficient forces to begin seriously building the revolutionary party".⁹⁰ The European Secretariat of the Fourth International replied that apart from its exceptional circumstances, "for example in England in the case of the Labour Party" such a "total 'entrism' policy" would be "equivalent to sure political suicide" as the left tendencies were "moving away from the reformist parties because they want to struggle".⁹¹

It was Gerry Healy, prompted by Pierre Frank, who first raised the question in a concrete form inside the R.C.P., by submitting a document in the discussion period running up to the Conference of 4th-6th August 1945. He argued very strongly along traditional Trotskyist lines:

"From the platform of the R.C.P. we advance the slogan of 'Labour

to Power' on the basis of our programme. The workers whom we seek to impress are going to undergo some of their greatest political experiences inside the Labour Party and on its periphery. Many of these in discussion will agree that our policy seems all right, but many who are conducting the actual fight inside the Labour Party will ask: 'What are you doing about it?' Serious workers do not easily desert their old organisations in response to a promise of something better. This is the central lesson which must be learned from the Stalinist ultra-left heydays. We are a small party of a few hundred members, conducting our 'Labour to Power' propaganda mainly *outside* the Labour Party. Is it not now vital for the future of the movement to face the facts and recognise that we have to supplement this propaganda by participation in the experiences of workers inside the Labour Party?

It is our contention that the tactical application of 'Labour to Power' in the coming period is the adoption of the perspective of entry into the Labour Party.....

When the War in Europe broke out in 1939, the overwhelming majority of British Trotskyists supported the 'entrust tactic', and there was every indication that such a policy would have been pursued to the hilt, had not the War cut across the leftward moment of the workers. At all times there was a complete agreement that the cadres of the future revolutionary party would be drawn from the most advanced political elements in the Labour movement. The turn to 'independent' work could only be a temporary phase until the Labour Party sprang to life again. Now, we have reached the situation where, without the shadow of a doubt, the most advanced workers are moving in its direction. Surely we are entitled to an explanation as to why the C.C. have revised the perspective of the 'entrust tactic' which was devised for such an eventuality. Have the gains of the past four or five years of independent work justified this?"⁹²

A later statement asked that if Haston agreed that at a future date it would be necessary to enter the Labour Party, then the orientation should begin to be discussed immediately, "otherwise we shall be sorely handicapped by the ill-preparedness of our party when the turn has to be made".⁹³

There was nothing unexceptional in Healy's theory, but the question was badly mishandled by the Minority. It was launched at the same time as the policy of concentrating on the I.L.P.,⁹⁴ making the two suggestions mutually incompatible, and laying open the Minority to the charge that they were trying to "ride two horses at one time".⁹⁵ Nor was the entry policy of the Minority entirely consistent. The different comrades put forward different positions on the question, there were different opinions on what were the preconditions for the tactic, and as late as the R.C.P. Conference of September 1946 there was a "unanimous agreement that now was not the

time to enter".⁹⁶ There was considerable indiscipline also in their ranks. The Tyneside group left and joined the Labour Party on their own account, and for a while Bob Shaw tried to jump the gun by doing the same thing in London.⁹⁷ The position was not made any more sound by trying to pretend that activity in the Labour Party was still at the heights of 1944-45, and that the only thing preventing "the Labour misleaders from losing their hold over the fermenting rank and file" was "the absence of a co-ordinated, principled, fighting, genuine left wing leadership".⁹⁸

But the real objection to the entry perspective was the economic background that served to underpin it, for it was at this time that Healy began his long career of promising apocalyptic slumps round the corner that he was to carry on repeating for thirty years, till the economy saw fit to agree with him:

"In Britain itself there has been an absolute and relative decline in the conditions of industry, a deterioration of the productive apparatus and a fall in the productivity of labour, with the exception of the war industries - aviation, engineering, ship-building and chemicals, etc.....

From this it is evident that British capitalism is on the edge of an abyss..... the carefully patched-up internal economy will collapse into either uncontrolled inflation or later, when the competition relates to world price values, into equally disastrous deflation.....

Our perspectives must be based upon the developing crisis which will exceed in scope and magnitude the depression that set in during the winter of 1920".⁹⁹

He continued to deny that life had become easier since Labour came to power, asserted that the full employment was "illusory", and claimed that "the former 'distressed areas' " were "once more showing a steady rise in unemployment".¹⁰⁰ Even when it was plain that recovery was on the way in 1947 Healy was warning that "the revival is taking place at the expense of working class living standards which have also deteriorated since the end of the War".¹⁰¹

None of this jumble of apocalyptic catastrophism bore the slightest correspondence with the facts. As Bill Hunter observed, "the confusion of the present with the future tenses, the false economic interpretations, flow from the fact that the comrades are determined, by hook or by crook, to find conditions for entry". Because there was no trace of a mass radicalisation in the Labour Party, they were depending upon the economy to create the conditions for one. As Hunter pointed out, "the 'economics' of the Minority comrades depict a harassed and desperate ruling class with no room for manoeuvres, no room for retreats or compromises".¹⁰² In terms of Marxism, this theory was a return to the postulates of Third Period Stalinism, which had asserted the "final crisis of capitalism" with the coming of the slump in 1929, The attempt of Ernest Mandel to get the Minority off the hook was no

more credible. "In the period of capitalist decadence British Industry *can no longer* overgrow the state of revival and attain one of real boom", he wrote. That there was "at most a boom in some isolated industries which does not determine the general aspect of the economy", and that "the situation of British economy is *not that of a boom* if one wishes to give this term the significance that Marxists have always given to it". The history of the last thirty years has dealt rather harshly with his remark that "if the comrades of the R.C.P. majority were to take their own definition seriously, they would logically conclude that we are confronting a 'boom' in *ALL CAPITALIST EUROPE*, because in all these countries production is 'expanding' ".¹⁰³ Ygael Gluckstein among others, had little trouble in demolishing this construction, pointing out that "taking into account the price changes that have occurred, there is no doubt that British investments today are the highest in volume for the past hundred years".¹⁰⁴

Far more durable have proved the perspectives of Grant and Haston:

"If we speak of the economic situation as being relatively stable, as one of upswing or boom - this is in line with all the facts: Production is increasing rapidly over industry as a whole, and is not being disrupted by mass strikes or struggles on the part of the working class, as it was after the last war. (There were twelve times more working days lost in the fifteen months following the end of the last War than there have been the in corresponding period following the War). This is a far more stable economic situation for British capitalism than the capitalists, reformists, or even the Trotskyists expected as the immediate outcome of the War.....

Meanwhile, it is precisely this economic upward development, with a Labour Government in power, which has created a relatively stable relation between the classes. It is precisely the combination of these economic factors that has made it possible for the capitalists to make concessions to the workers, for the Labour government to initiate reforms and semi-reforms.....

The nationalisations of the Labour Government are serious reforms of *considerable dimensions*. These nationalisation measures which the Government had already introduced, or is about to introduce, have had considerable influence *in creating reformist illusions* among the advanced elements who were sceptical of the Labour leaders carrying out their own declared programme, who are beginning to think that 'after all, Labour might do the job - give them a chance' ".¹⁰⁵

But in rejecting the perspective of immediate slump the Majority drew the false conclusion that entry was not a viable policy for the future. As Charlie Van Gelderen, head of the R.C.P.'s entry section, pointed out, it was "possible to reject completely the economic analysis contained in the

minority document” and “accept, basically, that of the majority document” whose “far more correct analysis of the coming period” laid down “a much firmer basis for an orientation towards entry than do the false economics of the minority”. For when the “moment of crisis” finally *did* arrive it was necessary that “we are firmly established inside the L(about) P(arty): that our programme is known to the workers; that we have behind us a record of consistent struggle against reformism and the Labour bureaucracy; and that we are looked upon by the rank-and-file as the alternative left wing leadership to which they can turn” which was “not a position which can be achieved overnight”.¹⁰⁶ D.D. Harber shared the same view.¹⁰⁷

Just as the Minority sought to base its case for entry on economic grounds, the Majority rejected it by pointing out that activity in the Labour Party had now shrunk back to its customary low level:

“On the international and national arena, the class struggle has developed on a slower tempo, and the decisive clashes have not yet taken place..... there cannot and will not be a speedy polarisation within the Labour Party.

That the masses are critical of the Labour Government, is undoubted. But they are tolerant and are prepared to extend a large credit of time to the Labour Government.....

The conjunction of circumstances has resulted in a deep political lull among the masses. This is reflected in the Labour Party as a political *swing to the right*.

The Labour organisations, which tended to revive after the election, are largely quiescent or dormant..... there is much less political life in the Labour Parties than before the War”.¹⁰⁸

From this it followed logically that Trotsky’s conditions for entry, as outlined in the period 1934-36, did not apply, for no mass centrist current existed. “Presumably, by recruiting to the Labour Party, we will commence the organisation of the left wing” ran a later statement - “presumably the Trotskyists will *create* the centrist current where none exists”.¹⁰⁹ “Because of the contradictory process”, went on Ted Grant, “the election of the Labour Government led to a turn to the right on the part of the masses and the Labour Party”.¹¹⁰ So far as the Majority were concerned the open orientation remained valid. “The experiences of entry in the past ten years, and the theoretical conclusions of Trotsky as to when and how entry is posed, demonstrate that not one of the conditions for either complete entry or placing the bulk of the organisation inside the Labour Party exist today, or are likely to do so in the immediate future”.¹¹¹

They were perfectly correct to point this out, but what they had missed was that Trotsky’s conditions had in fact already come and gone. When Trotsky had advised the British Trotskyists to enter the Labour Party he had confidently expected a mass radicalisation within its ranks. The tempo of developments had been altered by the intervention of the War, but

quicken again in 1944, when life returned to the local Labour Parties, wards swelled to some size, and the result was the two most left wing Labour Party conferences that have ever assembled, those of 1944 and 1945. Trotsky's conditions had indeed matured - but had completely by-passed the R.C.P., carrying out the open tactic of the time. The whole argument should have been about a missed opportunity, not a possible future one. It was not the case, as the Majority maintained, that the Minority was mistaking the first month of pregnancy for the ninth - the baby had already been born, and neither of them were aware of it. The long boom since removed all further possibilities for a generation. The real problem of the future was the survival of the R.C.P., not its success.

Moreover, the theory and practice of entry by the R.C.P. showed a regression to positions that had largely been rejected in the period 1936-9. The R.C.P. was still a small group - "not a party", as the Minority reminded them - yet they were still entertaining the opinion that the masses need not go through the local Labour parties, and they were still trying to work politically in the trade unions without following through the logic of taking their politics into the party:

"It is precisely the structure which makes it possible for revolutionary communists to work in, and bring pressure *through the trade union branches* (which are more active than the L(about) P(arties) *upon these labour organisations - without giving up our identity as Revolutionary Communists and members of the Fourth International*.....

What did Lenin and Trotsky mean when they spoke of the masses going through the experiences of the Labour Party in power? Did they mean that automatically and of necessity, the masses must go through the local organisations of the Labour Party? In that event, the Communist Party should never have been formed in Britain, nor the Trotskyist party. The Trotskyists should have entered the L(about) P(arty) and remained there until the masses had completed their experiences. This position, which was evolved by the 'Left' fraction who split from the R.C.P. in 1945, is now being seriously repeated in the camp of the British Minority".¹¹²

This was none other than the concept of the Marxist League and the old pre-August 1938 R.S.L., that had been tested and found wanting in its day and had been thoroughly rejected. Another worn-out concept that the R.C.P. revived, was that it was possible to carry out the tactic without the total entry of the revolutionary party into the mass organisation, as a sort of 'raiding tactic' of the Stalinist type, and in the only Labour Party controlled by the R.C.P., Chertsey, comrades sold the *Socialist Appeal* alongside the duplicated entry paper *The Militant*. This could only arouse suspicions and in the end provoke expulsions, as had been so many times explained in the past. As one of the R.C.P.'s most experienced entrists, Rudling explained:

"The position of the L(about) P(arty) fraction members renders it impossible to sell any large number of *S(ocialist) A(ppeal)s*. It exposes them immediately as members of the R.C.P., and the L.P. bureaucracy would secure their expulsion.....

If this is the prevailing conception in the R.C.P. of the rôle of the L.P. fraction, then it is merely limited to 'raiding tactics'. Comrades enter the L.P., proclaim aloud that they are R.C.P. members, distribute *S(ocialist) A(ppeal)s* - and then get bundled out on their necks, possibly dragging a contact or two with them. Third Period Stalinism could do no better. As an example of revolutionary mass work it is criminal irresponsibility".¹¹³

The entry paper, *The Militant*, was a very poor product, duplicated and with a very low circulation, provided with no financial support by the R.C.P. and supposed to pay its own way.¹¹⁴ The entry group of about 60 comrades, evenly divided between the two tendencies, functioned as a self-contained unit, whilst its members attended their local R.C.P. branches, some of which were split between the entrists and open workers. The only party member to get to speak at Conference was Karl Westwood, a supporter of the Majority faction, and his performance was not a good one, at one point coming close to the view that the War had been acceptable:

"We can do our great task only if we have a messianic spirit in the working class, so that every shop steward feels not the spirit of Dunkirk but the victorious spirit of Normandy; that he is winning the battle against the citadel of the capitalist system that has held him down".¹¹⁵

But the most disappointing feature of all was the R.C.P.'s inability to see that their small party could have no attractive power to the mass of the workers, who were naturally reluctant to desert the protection of a large organisation - at that time in government - for the shelter of a small one. On these lines an instructive anecdote emerged in the course of the R.C.P. Conference in 1946:

"A comrade from the Welsh mining and steel area..... related how L(about) P(arty) workers in this area had spoken to our comrade as follows..... 'Your *Socialist Appeal*' is a fine paper. We agree with nearly everything in it. We believe in your programme. We do not think our leaders in the Government are doing the job they should do. But why do you stand outside as a *little* party? Why don't you come in and help us make our *big* party work? Do you think that we have worked to build a Labour strength for 40 years, and now finally to see Labour in absolute majority in the Government, only to let all this pass and start anew?"¹¹⁶

In June 1946, the International Executive Committee discussed a resolution recommending "the concentration of the greatest part of the forces of the

R.C.P. within the Labour Party itself, with the object of patiently building up an organised Left Wing", that "the R.C.P. should weigh the practical possibilities of entry into this party". It passed with only one vote against, that of the R.C.P. itself.¹¹⁷ Accordingly the Minority put down a resolution to the September R.C.P. Conference calling for "a course towards total entry into the Labour Party" to be able to lay down a "record of struggle around the transitional demands of the Fourth International related to immediate issues" and to integrate itself with the "rank and file of the Labour Party membership". The 'open party' was still considered to have a rôle at this time, but "subordinate to the work of the Labour Party Faction".¹¹⁸ The resolution failed to gain support.

By the spring of the following year it was plain that the R.C.P. was stagnating. But the support of the Minority remained at about quarter of the membership, and had little chance of gaining a majority, as by then factional lines were fiercely drawn. In March 1947 the International Secretariat wrote to the R.C.P. to support to the case for immediate entry:

"The unique character of the Labour Party..... is so directly tied up with the basic trade union organisations of the workers..... The workers feel that this is their government, the Government that they have been striving for. Moreover, they feel that they can influence it because it is so closely linked with their basic organisations. The natural course for them, so to speak, appears to be to take political action within the frame-work of the Labour Party. From their point of view, it seems much easier and less costly for them to obtain satisfaction for demands from 'their' government than to look for other roads.....

Our task, the task of the Labour Party orientation, even of eventual entry, is not essentially *immediate* recruitment. It is to bring the *Transitional Programme* of Trotskyism to the workers in the course of their development towards struggle, to go through their experiences with them in applying the demands incorporated in the programme according to the needs of the given moment, to convince them, in the course of participation in their daily lives, that this is the programme which can achieve their goal.....

Entry into the Labour Party today, therefore, signifies for the Trotskyists a campaign of relatively long duration. The task is not so much the winning over of individuals here and there to the full programme of Trotskyism at the moment, but the winning over of whole sections of the workers in the Labour Party and in the trade unions affiliated with it to revolutionary action on the basis of transitional demands".¹¹⁹

This was the first inkling that the entrust tactic was not to be a brief episodic affair set against an immediate catastrophic perspective, but was meant to be a strategy for an extended period. The Labour Party, explained Michael

Raptis, the International Secretary, was "not only the formal members", but "the whole of the working class, which for the present has confidence in it and does not yet see a political alternative", and the Trotskyists should enter "without waiting for the Left Wing to crystallise around centrist leaders on a centrist platform".¹²⁰ From this it was also obvious that if a left current did not exist, it was the task of the Trotskyists to organise one.

On 14th and 15th June, the supporters of the Minority held a conference in London prior to the Annual Congress of the R.C.P. There they decided to declare themselves a faction, and in the event of not gaining a majority for entry at the congress to request the I.E.C. to "allow the supporters of entry to work within the Labour Party under their own control"¹²¹ by "allowing", temporarily, a division of the British Section into an open and an entrlist group"¹²² Not surprisingly, the R.C.P. Political Bureau dismissed this as an ultimatum - "adopt the entrlist tactic or we split the party".¹²³ After a five hour wrangle, Conference rejected the motion to split the party into two groups under I.S. supervision by 28 votes to 7.¹²⁴ The issue had become so contentious that when the International Executive Committee discussed it on the 17th September it struck off a group of three, including Haston, to prepare a resolution which laid down the following:

"Faced with the situation where the majority at the last congress of the party declared itself against the total entry into the L(about) P(arty) at this time, while the I.E.C. has on three occasions favoured such an orientation, the I.E.C. is of the opinion that it would be wrong to impose its views on the majority by instructing it to enter the Labour Party.

On the other hand, the R.C.P. Minority which favours total entry has made an appeal to the I.E.C. to make it possible for it as a group to enter the Labour Party under the following terms acceptable to the R.C.P. representatives on the I.E.C.: The Minority as a group, when it enters the L(about) P(arty), shall function independently under the direct discipline of the Executive bodies of the International. Both organisations are recognised as an integral part of the International with all rights and obligations..... The I.E.C. emphasise that this solution is exceptional and cannot be considered a precedent in regulating the life of the sections.

This solution shall be reviewed periodically in the light of the experience of the work inside the Labour Party as well as the independent work of the R.C.P. for the purpose of re-establishing the unity of the B(ritish) S(ection of the) F(ourth) I(nternational) as soon as possible".¹²⁵

A special conference of the R.C.P. was called on October 11th which divided the party "allowing both organisations to work out concretely their perspectives and tasks".¹²⁶

Henceforward, there were now two organisations of the Fourth

International in Britain, in fact, if not in name, and whilst both continued to send delegates to international functions, their contact in Britain was quite small. Many of the R.C.P. were enraged at the decision, calling it "A DISGRACEFUL MANOEUVRE TO GET RID OF THE DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED LEADERSHIP OF A SECTION OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL", and adding that "the establishment of such a precedent as the I.S. proposes can lead to similar situations in every section in the future".¹²⁷

They were not at all wrong on that score. Once the experiment had been tried with the R.C.P., it became a well-tested method used by the international leaders to bring recalcitrant sections into line, the rest of the technique being to reduce the less favoured group to sympathiser status, and ultimately to expel it. Several Trotskyist organisations - two of them in Britain, and many in the rest of the world - originated in this way. It was certainly a retrogression in the terms of the British movement, right back to the original split on entry into the I.L.P. in December 1933. The discussion on the Labour Party tactic, too, was on an infinitely lower level than that which prevailed in the period 1936-9. Both features well illustrate the ideological stagnation and deterioration that comes from missing the opportunities presented for advance by the progress of history.

Haston was less unhappy with the decision. As far as he was concerned, the end of the incessant arguing left the field open for more meaningful work in the movement outside. As he recalled it:

"Well, I never personally had a hard line on that score. It seemed to me that if the divisions between us were of such a nature that we couldn't live together, with a unified point of view, at least we should try the other. I've never been in favour of imposing (if I possibly could) decisions on a minority. I've always, all my life - while I was playing some kind of leading rôle - tried to arrive at some synthesis and some agreement, and in the circumstances of that particular type, especially in view of the fact that they had the total backing of the International Secretariat, it seemed the only sensible thing to do. I had no problem about that, and in fact, if my view had been followed, we would probably have done that much earlier. The only point is, I thought it would lead, at least, to a far more harmonious relationship within the International, in which we could openly deal with each other - which never transpired".¹²⁸

Excesses of factionalism are inevitable in a conflict that rages for nearly six years, and whilst it is plain that the Majority were trying to work out a view of the post-war world, the striking lack of originality in the Minority's view and the absence of any link between the points they raised created a suspicion that "they changed their position and were just using it as a stick to beat a dog".¹²⁹ No documents exist from the Minority, as apart from the International leadership, in which there is any attempt to grapple with the

problems of the postwar world, or even awareness that they existed. If they had any views of their own apart from those of the International Secretariat, they did not show them. As Bert Atkinson recalls:

“I remember in particular one Saturday night when he came down to an aggregate meeting, and we were talking about ‘Perspectives for Britain’. Now all that Healy did was to bring down Trotsky’s book *Where is Britain Going?*, and based himself completely on that, and he never altered a word or a comma. This was typical of Healy’s whole utterances at that time. I always got the impression, always felt, that his position was that he was repeating what he was being fed by the American Section, Cannon and Company, and that Healy never had any firm theoretical differences - none at all! I never found any, and all he was actually raising were tactical points, you know, and general dissatisfaction with the way things were going, and advancing criticisms of the way the work was being done; anything of a theoretical nature he never raised at all. In fact, he was the most orthodox of the orthodox, and it seemed to me (as I am saying, I may do him a disservice, but I don’t think so) I think that it was a bid for the leadership for personal reasons”.¹³⁰

The behaviour for the Healy Minority gave every cause to the leadership to understand that they were being stimulated by the S.W.P. and afterwards by the new leadership in Europe. Although the minority had declared at the fusion conference of the R.C.P. that their faction was dissolved, it was kept in existence in secret and enjoyed similar ties with the International. As early as January 1945 the R.C.P. was complaining that “the leadership of the British Party are not informed of these arrangements and discussions and learn of them by accident or not at all”.¹³¹ The closeness of this relationship was revealed when evidence came into the hands of the R.C.P. that Healy had written to Cochran of the S.W.P. asking when they should declare their secret faction ‘publicly’ to the rest of the party.¹³² The link did not reflect any glory on the Minority, and involved them automatically in the defence of the more absurd positions of the International Secretariat, often with ludicrous results. When the R.C.P. Central Committee debated and passed a resolution calling for the withdrawal of the Red Army from the occupied territories, Goffe opposed it and Healy was in support. But when the R.C.P. took this same view to the International Pre-conference in April 1946, it was not adopted, though it was not voted on, and whilst the resolution called for the withdrawal of the Allied Armies in general it did not get through. In line with the view of the Pre-conference that Russia had emerged from the Second World War in a weak state, the Minority now opposed the idea that the Red Army should withdraw as well. But in June 1946 the International Executive Committee passed unanimously a resolution that called for Russian army withdrawal.¹³³ The scene was

reminiscent, on a small scale, of one of the more amusing somersaults of the Comintern, according to Grant:

“The International had remained silent on this question, and therefore, to get the issue quite clear, we wrote a letter to the International Secretariat in Paris demanding that they should clarify the position that they took on this question. Now it just happened that on the day on which the letter arrived we had invited Gerry Healy, for some question or other (I don’t even remember what it was, it’s not important). We had invited Gerry Healy to a meeting of the Political Bureau to discuss some organisational question or other and the Correspondence Secretary opened the mail, and there was this letter, and she read it out while Healy was present. She read it out, and it was four lines, and she read it out: ‘Yes, comrades, we stand uncompromisingly on the withdrawal of the Red Armies as well as the withdrawal of the imperialist armies of occupation in Europe’. It was the natural thing, we all looked at Healy, who had been waging a vehement campaign for weeks and months in the R.C.P. on this question against the alleged revisionist position of the leadership. Healy turned as white as a sheet. We all looked at him like in the advert - everyone looking at him like the man who sneezed - and he threw out his arms, and he looked at us, and said, ‘Well, so we got agreement’ ”.¹³⁴

An equally unthinking commitment to the International Secretariat’s economic perspectives led to the Minority having to withdraw one of its documents in the course of an annual conference.

In view of this persistent factionalism, forever shifting its ground as it was defeated on one question or another, it should be asked as to why the International Secretariat should have seen the need for it, for a real international leadership would have dealt with the R.C.P.’s arguments by serious discussion. For whilst the R.C.P. leaders were about a year too late in their estimate of events, the I.S. was two years behind them. Here the real answer must be sought in the lack of revolutionary authority that the I.S. enjoyed in the rest of the world Trotskyist movement, which led to an over-emphasis upon its rights and status that was certainly not warranted by its record of political leadership.¹³⁵ What rankled most of all with the I.S. was the independent judgement exercised by the W.I.L. and the R.C.P. leadership that had proved correct on several occasions, leading them to raise again the charge of “disloyalty” against the W.I.L. over the conditions of the split of 1937 - an attempt to rake over past differences that was repudiated by all the main survivors of the original dispute.¹³⁶ The I.S. gained no more credibility by resorting to intrigue, such as when their representatives refused to take part in the main sessions of the R.C.P. congress in 1947 on the grounds of “security”, yet directed the Minority struggle in secret from a café at the other side of the street.¹³⁷

The constant factional warfare might not have served to advance political understanding within the Trotskyist movement, but it did help to accelerate its decline. "Already disgust and apathy has started to spread among the membership", commented the Political Bureau, as members preferred to "stay away from aggregates than waste their time in such farcical discussions".¹³⁸ Healy, on the other hand, put it down to the lack of perspective of the Open Party orientation:

"The policy of the majority is stagnation and more stagnation. It is time to call a halt. Let the rank and file members of the R.C.P. call the sectarians to book and change the course of the Party towards total entry into the Labour Party".¹³⁹

Haston was more inclined to put it down to the over concentration on internal disputes, which channelled the resources and energy away from the struggle in the Labour movement towards a purely internal existence. The internal documentation of the last three years of the R.C.P. became just as extensive as that of the old R.S.L. had been, and although new ideas were certainly aired, most of it was the arid exchanges of charges and counter-charges:

Millie Lee: "The main problem was the *Internal Bulletins*, which came in fast and furious. Most of the time was spent churning out *Internal Bulletins*, one side attacking the other.

Jock Haston: "..... we quite early adopted a rule that anybody who had a difference and who produced a paper on that difference would have that paper produced and circulated within twenty-one days - that was the time limit on the circulation of documents. I would say that at one stage nine tenths of our activity was spent in producing *Internal Bulletins*..... particularly once Cannon got involved with Healy, and Healy became Cannon's man in a sense, then an enormous amount of our stuff was *Internal Bulletins*".¹⁴⁰

The organiser's report to the R.C.P. Conference admitted that between 1st July and the date of the September 1946 Conference the number of professionals had been drastically reduced, membership had declined by 27 in the course of 1946-7, the theoretical magazine *Workers International News* did not appear for two months, and then resumed as a duplicated journal, and the post of National Treasurer was now an unpaid appointment.¹⁴¹

As an essentially activist organisation, the R.C.P. continued its wartime strategy of concentrating on where the action was taking place. In January 1947 the London Haulage workers went on strike, and the Government again threatened to use troops. When a meeting of 2000 transport workers howled out Arthur Deakin from Stratford Town Hall under police protection for trying to break the strike, he accused the R.C.P. of trying to "destroy this working class organisation which we have built up in so many

laborious years",¹⁴² and asked "Are you going to allow yourselves to be influenced by irresponsible Trotskyists?"¹⁴³

When the *Socialist Appeal* special praised the Smithfield Meat Porters for threatening to go on strike if troops were used the *Evening Standard* tried to invoke charges of "sedition" against the R.C.P., and Tufton Beamish, the Tory M.P. for Lewes, alleged in Parliament that the strike was "largely organised" by them. The Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Labour replied that although they "might have encouraged the strike, once it started there was no evidence to show they organised it".¹⁴⁴ He was telling no less than the truth. Despite valiant efforts - 3000 leaflets were put out - only 2 R.C.P. members sat on local strike committees, and "no direct link was established by the party with the strike committee".¹⁴⁵

A month later the Party tried to use its support in the Engineering Union, to set up workers' Councils of Action as an answer to the Fuel Crisis. The Chairman and Convenor of the Campaign Committee in the Mitcham Factory Belt was Fred Emmett, a supporter of the Minority, and he was able to link up with the other R.C.P.ers who led the one in Southgate. A deputation of 100 from 67 factories lobbied the House of Commons, and warmly applauded the Trotskyist speaker at the report back. But the Communist Party was still well dug in the A.E.U., and straight after the meeting called all their Shop Stewards together to warn them then that there must be no further deputation or conferences "if there was any chance of the Trotskyists being in control". The men went back shortly afterwards.¹⁴⁶

The R.C.P. was much better placed to intervene in the next dispute. From 1946 the London hotel workers, members of the General and Municipal Workers' Union, were trying to get the management to agree to proper negotiation procedures. Some of the firms, such as Lyons, were willing to agree, but in March 1947 the Savoy Group sacked one of its shop stewards. The workers came out, but were persuaded to go back pending the results of arbitration. When the joint board reinstated the man, the Savoy owners refused to accept its findings, and the union made the dispute official. Marion Lunt, a supporter of the Majority, and one of the leading spirits on the strike committee, got arrested, and the R.C.P.ers acted as pickets, but it was impossible to stop the Savoy's clientèle - including the future Queen Elizabeth II - from crossing the lines, and even some supplies were brought in despite support from the Transport Workers. On one such occasion an oil tanker was backed in, and Haston remembers cutting his supply line with a pair of bolt cutters.¹⁴⁷ In October 1947 *Socialist Appeal* carried an article by Marion Lunt attacking the Savoy Managers, who promptly slapped a writ for libel damages upon Ted Grant, as Editor and Brock, who printed it. In the end the case was not proceeded with, and the union was awarded some recognition rights. But the R.C.P. made no gains at all from the strike, for then as now catering staff were notoriously difficult to organise, being largely transient and many of them new to the country.¹⁴⁸

The last really sustained activity of the R.C.P. shows that their

intervention had now dwindled to street politics. In Summer 1947 the Fascists began a build-up in the East End prior to staging Mosley's first open air public meeting since the war. Ridley Road in Dalston became the site of disorderly scenes as members of the R.C.P., Commonwealth, and many rank and file Communists fought to prevent the revival of Nazism under the form of the "Union Movement". Attempts were made to shame the Communist Party apparatus into a more militant stance, for when the Fascists took over the Communist Party's speaking pitch on one occasion they obeyed a police request to move off,¹⁴⁹ and instead of relying on workers's defence squads, they tried their usual tack of calling upon the Government to ban the Fascists, and for the workers to rely on the police to do their duty.¹⁵⁰ On one occasion Tommy Reilly, the Anti-Fascist organiser of the R.C.P., was arrested for occupying a speaking platform along with Common Wealth all night to prevent Fascists speaking there.¹⁵¹ The activity brought the R.C.P. some good publicity in the local papers,¹⁵² but otherwise no real gains. Impressed with the progress of Stalinism in Eastern Europe, Reilly applied to join the Communist Party in 1948, but they refused to accept him, and now he is a long standing member of the Labour Party in North London.

It is interesting that the last public activity of the R.C.P. should have been a drive against Nazism, admittedly more alarming straight after the Second World War than it has appeared since, for when more meaningful activity is beyond the reach of Trotskyist organisations today they tend to concentrate on this work if they lack support inside the broad movement. In the case of the R.C.P. leaders it was a full turn of the circle, for some of their first work on the fringes of the Labour movement in 1938 had been of this nature. It also admitted that they were back where they started.

Notes

1. Bob Allen, 'Redundancy', in *Socialist Appeal*, vol. vi, no. 6, October, 1944, p.3.
2. (Roy Tearse), Editorial, in *Industrial Bulletin* of the R.C.P., no. 1, Nov. '44.
3. 'Statement of the Political Bureau on Redundancy', 29th December, 1944.
4. F. Emmett and G. Healy, 'The Party's Policy on Redundancy', 14th Dec. 1944.
5. F. Emmett and G. Healy, 'the Transitional Programme and Redundancy', 9th February, 1945.
6. Sid Bidwell, 'Further Contributions to the Industrial Discussion', January, 1945.
7. J. Jones, Secretary, G(waun)C(ae) G(urwen) Branch, 'The Seniority Rule in South Wales', in *Internal Bulletin* of the R.C.P., April, 1945, pp. 7-8.
8. B. Condon, 'Nons First Versus Seniority', Internal Document, R.C.P. (n.d.).
9. A. Walker, 'A Criticism of the November Editorial in the Industrial Bulletin', in the *Internal Bulletin* of the R.C.P. (n.d.).
10. Percy Downey, Interview with Sam Bornstein, 26th November, 1977.
11. *Revolutionary Communist Policy*, pamphlet containing the R.C.P. Conference Resolutions, 4th-6th August, 1945, p.35.

12. G. Hodgson, *Trotsky and Fatalistic Marxism*, Nottingham 1975, p.56, for some of the reasons for this.
13. H. Finch, 'Criticism of the Statement of the Political Bureau on Redundancy', in the *Internal Bulletin* of the R.C.P., 17th February, 1945, p.13.
14. 'Statement of the Political Bureau on Redundancy', 29th December, 1944, pp. 2 and 6.
15. J. Deane, 'The Importance of the Present Discussion', in the *Internal Bulletin* of the R.C.P., new series no. 7, February 1945, p.4.
16. Op. Cit, n. 11 above, p.29.
17. *The World Revolution and the Tasks of the British Working Class*, Resolutions of the October 1943 Conference of the W.I.L., W.I.L. pamphlet, 1943, pp. 8-9.
18. H. Finch, Op. cit., n.13, above, pp. 12-13.
19. L. Trotsky, Introduction to *The Living Thoughts of Karl Marx*, London, 1940, p.17.
20. L. Trotsky, 'Manifesto of the Fourth International on the Imperialist War and the Proletarian World Revolution', May 1940, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1939-40*, New York, 1973, p.213.
21. L. Trotsky, 'Stalin-Hitler's Quartermaster', 2nd September, 1939, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1939-40*, New York, 1973, p.80.
22. L. Trotsky, 'Manifesto of the Fourth International on the Imperialist War and the Proletarian World Revolution', May 1940, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky 1939-40*, New York, 1973, p.196.
23. L. Trotsky, 'Only Revolution Can End War', March, 1939, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky 1938-9*, New York, 1974, p.234. A number of statements of this type are collected together in G. Hodgson, *Trotsky and Fatalistic Marxism*, Nottingham 1975, especially pp. 33-4, though he is not careful to distinguish between general characterisations of the epoch and particular conjunctural crisis within it.
24. L. Trotsky, 'The Twin Stars: Hitler-Stalin', 4th December, 1939, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1939-1940*, New York, 1973, p.124.
25. L. Trotsky, 'A Fresh Lesson', 10th October 1938, in *Writings of Leon Trotsky 1938-9*, New York 1974, p.63.
26. F. Morrow, 'First Phases of the Coming European Revolution', Report to the S.W.P. Plenum, October, 1943, in the *Internal Bulletin* of the S.W.P., vol. vi, no. 4, September 1944; reprinted as an internal document of the R.C.P., pp. 5 and 6.
27. F. Morrow, 'Letter to All Sections of the Fourth International', 15th November, 1945, in the *Internal Bulletin* of the S.W.P., vol. vii, no. 12, November, 1945, p.1.
28. The Minority's objections were only finally published after they had appeared in a rival publication. C.f. F. Morrow, op. cit. n. 27 above, and in *The New International*, vol. xii, no. 2, February, 1946, p.49.
29. *Fourth International*, vol. vi, no. 8, August, 1945.
30. C. Carsten, "Wall Street Continues to Prepare for World War III Against U.S.S.R.", in *The Militant*, vol. x, no. 18, 4th May, 1946, p.3, E. Attwood, "People Have Not Even Become Recovered From World War II", in *The Militant*, vol. x, no. 27, 27th July, 1946, p.8.
31. J.P. Cannon, Speech delivered at the 28th Anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, in *The Militant*, 17th November, 1945.
32. F. Morrow, op. cit. n. 27 above.
33. 'Resolution of the 15th Anniversary Plenum on Perspectives and Tasks of the Coming European Revolution', 2nd November, 1943, in the *Internal Bulletin*, S.W.P., vol. vi, no. 3, September, 1944, pp. 5-8. In fact, the original draft was even more extreme on these points. C.f. F. Morrow, 'The First Phase of the Coming European Revolution', December, 1943, in the *Internal Bulletin*, of the S.W.P., vol. vi, no. 4, September, 1944, 1-19. It is the chief defect of the treatment of this subject by P. Jenkins, *Where Trotskyism Got Lost*, Spokesman pamphlet no. 59, Nottingham (n.d.) that he quotes only from documents in their publicly printed form. As we shall have reason to notice, they have been tampered with on not infrequent occasions.
34. E.R. Frank (Cochran), 'The European Revolution - Its Prospects and Tasks', Speech to

- the New York Membership Meeting, October 4th, 1944, in the *Internal Bulletin* of the S.W.P., vol. vi, no. 8, October, 1944, p.20.
35. J. Hansen, 'Elections in Italy and France Reveal Danger of Fascism in Europe', in *The Militant*, 3rd December, 1947.
 36. 'Draft Resolution of the National Committee on The European Revolution and the Tasks of the Revolutionary Party', in the *Internal Bulletin* of the S.W.P. vol. vi, no. 3, September, 1944, pp. 21-3.
 37. F. Morrow, 'Report to Plenum', (October, 1943), in the *Internal Bulletin* of the S.W.P., vol. vi, no. 4, September, 1944, p.21-3.
 38. F. Morrow, 'The First Phases of the Coming European Revolution', December, 1943, in the *Internal Bulletin* of the S.W.P., vol. vi, no. 4, September 1944, pp. 2, 17-8.
 39. 'Motion on the Minority Faction', in *Fourth International*, vol. viii, no. 1, January 1947.
 40. F. Morrow, 'Letter to All Sections of the Fourth International', 15th November, 1945, in the *Internal Bulletin* of the S.W.P., vol. vii, no. 12, November, 1945, p.1. On the general thrust of Morrow's criticisms, c.f. P. Jenkins, *Where Trotskyism Got Lost*, Spokesman pamphlet no. 59, Nottingham, n.d. A more rounded analysis would have to take into account the rich documentation only to be found in the internal discussion in the S.W.P., which lies outside the scope of the present work.
 41. H. Morrison, 'The Trotskyist Movement in Britain', W.P. (44), 202, 13th April, 1944, p.2.
 42. Bert Atkinson, Interview with Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, 4th November, 1977.
 43. Roy Tearse, Interview with Al Richardson, 6th July, 1978.
 44. 'Preparing for Power', Thesis of the W.I.L. Conference of 22nd-23rd August, 1943, in *Workers International News*, vol. v, no. 6, September, 1942, p.30.
 45. E. Grant, 'Italian Revolution - and the Tasks of the British Workers', in *Workers International News*, vol. v, no. 12, August 1943, p.4.
 46. *The World Revolution and the Tasks of the British Working Class*, Thesis of the W.I.L. Conference, October 1943, W.I.L. pamphlet, p.9.
 47. 'Resolution on the National Question in Europe Issued by the C.C. of the R.C.P. for Discussion in the Party', in *Workers International News*, vol. v, no. 9, July - August 1945, p.7.
 48. E. Grant, 'The Character of the European Revolution', in *Workers International News*, vol. vi, no. 1, October, 1945, p.14.
 49. 'P(olitical) B(ureau) Statement on the Question of P.Frank', Internal Document of the R.C.P., 20th September, 1945, p.6; *Internal Bulletin* of the S.W.P., vol. viii, no. 4, March, 1946, p.14.
 50. W. Simmons, 'Trotskyist Tasks in Europe', in *Workers International News*, vol. vi, no. 4, January, 1946, p. 117 (Reprinted from *Fourth International*, vol. vi, no. 7, July, 1945).
 51. 'The Maturing Situation in Europe and the Tasks of the Fourth International', Resolution adopted by the European Executive of the Fourth International, January, 1945, in *Workers International News* vol. v, no. 9, July-August, 1945, p.21.
 52. 'The New Imperialist 'Peace' and the Building Up of the Parties of the Fourth International', Report submitted for International Discussion Approved by the European Secretariat, December, 1945, pp. 1 and 3, internal document of the R.C.P.
 53. Op. cit., n. 51 above, pp. 21-2.
 54. F. Morrow, 'Letter to the European Secretariat of the Fourth International', 10th July, 1945, in *Fourth International*, vol. vii, no. 3, March 1945, p.84; *New International*, vol. xii, no. 1, January, 1946, pp. 13-5 (reprinted from the *Internal Bulletin* of the S.W.P., vol. vii, no. 12, November 1945, pp. 1-6); 'It is Time to Grow Up: The Infantile Sickness of the European Secretariat', 24th February, 1946, in the *Internal Bulletin* of the S.W.P., vol. viii, no. 5, April 1946, p.30. I. Craipeau, *Le Mouvement Trotskyste en France*, Paris 1971, p.200; J. Roussel, *Le Enfants du Prophète* Paris, 1972, p.35.
 55. P. Frank, 'Democracy or Bonapartism in Europe?', in *Workers International News*, vol. vi, no. 7, June-July 1946, pp. 207-19.
 56. E. Grant, 'Democracy or Bonapartism in Europe', in *Workers International News*, vol. vi, no 8, August 1946, pp. 241-56.

57. Natalia Sedova, Grandizo Munis and Benjamin Péret, 'The Fourth International in Danger', 27th June, 1947, in the *Internal Bulletin* of the International Secretariat of the Fourth International, December 1947, p.7; B. Péret, 'Letter of the Spanish Group in Mexico to the International Secretariat', 17th April, 1946, in the *Internal Bulletin* of the S.W.P., vol. i, no. 1, September 1946, p.30.
58. 'Report of the National Council Meeting held on 6th April, 1946', internal document of the R.C.P., p.2.
59. 'Report Submitted for International Discussion Approved by the European Secretariat 'The New Imperialist Peace and the Building Up of the Parties of the Fourth International' ', internal document of the R.C.P., p.13.
60. Op. cit. p.6.
61. Op. cit. p.8.
62. Op. cit. pp. 7-8.
63. 'Proposed Line of Amendments to the International Conference Resolution 'New Imperialist Peace and the Building of the Parties of the Fourth International'', in *R.C.P. Conference Documents 1946*, p.7. C.f. *Workers International News*, vol. vi, no. 10, November-December 1946, p.330.
64. 'Proposed Amendments to 'New Imperialist Peace and the Building of the Parties of the Fourth International'', in *Workers International News*, vol. vi, no. 10, November-December, 1946, pp. 323-5. C.f. G. Hodgson, *Trotsky and Fatalistic Marxism*, Nottingham, 1975, pp. 38-40. The amendments were largely the work of Jock Haston and Bill Hunter. (Bill Hunter, Interview with Al Richardson, 5th and 14th June, 1986).
65. Jock Haston, Interview with Al Richardson, 30th April, 1978.
66. John Goffe, Interview with Al Richardson, 18th May, 1978. C.f. 'George Breitman (1916-1986): More than half a Century of Revolutionary Dedication', in *International Viewpoint*, 1986, pp. 23-4, no. 99, 19th May.
67. Jock Haston, Interview with Al Richardson, 30th April, 1978.
68. R. Tearse, 'An Analysis of the Changes in the International Conference Resolution in the Light of the British R.C.P. Amendments', 27th July, 1946, in *R.C.P. Conference Documents 1946*, pp. 4,5,9.
69. Natalia Sedova, Grandizo Munis and Benjamin Péret, 'The Fourth International in Danger', 27th June, 1947, in the *Internal Bulletin* of the International Secretariat of the Fourth International, December, 1947, p.7.
70. R. Tearse, op. cit., n. 68 above, p.12.
71. 'Report of the National Council Meeting Held on 6th April, 1946', internal documents of the R.C.P.
72. For the details of this dispute, c.f. P(olitical) B(ureau) R.C.P., 'An Appeal for Revolutionary Integrity in Discussion: The Minority and the Demand for the Withdrawal of the Red Army from Occupied Territories', in *R.C.P. Conference Documents 1946*, 4th August, 1946, p. 1ff.
73. J. Haston, 'The Dual Character of the U.S.S.R.: Marxism Versus Phrase mongering' in *R.C.P. Conference Documents 1946*, 4th August, 1946, pp. 18, 25, 28 and 32.
74. R. Armstrong and M. Merrigan, 'In Defence of Revisionism', in the *Internal Bulletin* of the R.C.P., 4th September, 1946; The Irish Section, 'The Russian Question', 1947.
75. A.W. Atkinson, 'On the Russian Question', in the *Internal Bulletin* of the R.C.P., July, 1947, p.5.
76. R. Carson and B. Evans, 'A Contribution to the Discussion on Russia', in the *Internal Bulletin* of the R.C.P., June, 1947, pp. 5 and 1; 'Must the R.C.P. Collapse?', in the *Internal Bulletin* of the R.C.P., August 1947.
77. E. Grant, 'History of British Trotskyism' (tape transcription), part ii, p. 53. For the final decision, c.f. *Workers International News*, vol. vi, no. 9, September-October 1946, p. 26-8.
78. Ernest Germain, 'The Conflict in Poland', 15th November, 1946, in *Fourth International*, vol. viii, no. 2, February, 1947, p.49.
79. "May Day 1947: A Day of World Struggle for Bread, Peace and Socialism!", 'Manifesto of

- the Fourth International to the Workers of the Entire World', 1st May, 1947 in *Fourth International*, vol. ix, no. 5, May 1947, p. 133.
80. 'C.C. Resolution on the Nature of the Soviet Union', 7th July, 1946. C.f. *Workers International News*, vol. vi, no. 9, September-October, 1946, p. 268. Haston's first reaction, at the September 1946 Conference, was to argue that as Czechoslovakia was "state capitalist", the same must be true of the Soviet Union. C.f. P(olitical) B(ureau), 'Letter to the I(nternational) S(ecretariat)', February 21st, 1949, in *Forum*, discussion Bulletin of the I.S.L. (Shachtman), vol. 1, no. 1, 15th June 1949, p.42.
 81. Frank Ward, Interview with Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, 27th September, 1980.
 82. 'Nationalisation', in 'Perspectives in Britain and the Orientation of the Revolutionary Communist Party', *Socialist Appeal* no. 30, mid September 1946, p.4.
 83. R.H. Condon, 'The New Order', 18th January 1947, in the *Internal Bulletin* of the R.C.P., March 1947, pp 1-2.
 84. R.H. Condon, 'Thesis and Prognosis by the Marxist Method on Nationalisation Under a Capitalist State, with Discussion on Its Tendencies and Implications Towards an Organised Society', 4th February, 1947, in the *Internal Bulletin* of the R.C.P., March 1947, p.15. Condon left the group shortly afterwards.
 85. 'Letter to Comrade Condon from the Political Bureau', 6th February, 1947, in the *Internal Bulletin* of the R.C.P., March, 1947, p.9.
 86. W. Hunter, 'The Nationalisation of British Industry', in *Workers International News* vol. vii, no. 2, May 1947, pp. 1-4-5.
 87. 'Capitalist Statification: Central Committee Resolution - for Discussion', in *Socialist Appeal*, no. 48, September 1947, p.4.
 88. 'Capitalist Statification', in *Socialist Appeal* no. 50, October 1947, p.3. The whole document, including the first part passed by conference, was serialised in that paper, nos. 47-50, Mid-August-October 1947, a study well worth reprinting today.
 89. P(olitical) B(ureau), 'The Tendency to Statification: A Necessary Correction' in *Workers International News*, vol. vii, no. 6, November-December 1948, especially pp. 9 and 17.
 90. F. Morrow, 'Letter to the European Secretariat of the Fourth International', 10th July, 1945, in the *Internal Bulletin* of the S.W.P., vol. vii, no. 12, November 1945, pp. 1-6. C.f. *New International* vol. vii, no. 3, March 1946, p.83.
 91. 'A Reply to Comrade Morrow by the Secretariat of the Fourth International', unanimously adopted, January 1946, in *Fourth International*, vol. vii, no. 3, March 1946, p.88.
 92. G. Healy, 'On Our Tasks and Perspectives', 30th June, 1945, in the *Internal Bulletin* of the R.C.P., new series no. 9, pp. 5-6, 15.
 93. G. Healy, 'An Open Letter to the Central Committee', 18th July, 1945, internal document of the R.C.P., p.4.
 94. Above, p.145.
 95. '1945 Conference Discussion: Entry and the Revolutionary Party', P(olitical) B(ureau) Reply to the Discussion, 20th July, 1945, p.18.
 96. 'Letter of Comrade J. Haston', in the *Internal Bulletin* of the R.C.P., March 1947, pp. 13-4. C.f. Paul Dixon (D.D. Harber), 'The 1945 Congress of the R.C.P. A Reply to Comrades Goffe and Healy', 23rd November 1945, p.10.
 97. M. Shaw, *Robert Shaw: Fighter for Trotskyism*, London 1983, pp. 72-4; E.C. Entrist Faction, 'The Crisis in the Revolutionary Communist Party', 21st July 1947, pp. 10-11.
 98. T.J. Peters, 'Mood of British Workers Shows Rise in Militancy', in *The Militant* (SWP) vol. xi, no. 24, 14th June 1947 (Report of the Margate Conference of the Labour Party, 31st May).
 99. H. Finch, G. Healy, J. Goffe and J. Lawrence, 'The Turn to Mass Work', 17th July 1946, in the *Internal Bulletin* of the R.C.P. pp 1-6.
 100. G. Healy, 'A Balance Sheet of Perspectives', 7th August 1946, in *R.C.P. Conference Documents 1946*, pp. 6 and 8.
 101. C.C. Minority, 'Some Comments on the P(olitical) B(ureau) Reply to the I(nternational) S(ecretariat)', 21st April 1947, in the *Internal Bulletin* of the R.C.P. April 1947, p.1.

102. W. Hunter, 'British Perspectives - The Economics of the Discussion' in the *Internal Bulletin* of the R.C.P., 21st August 1946, p.7.
103. E. Germain, 'From the A.B.C. to Current Reading: Boom, Revival or Crisis?', in the *Internal Bulletin* of the R.C.P., September 1947, pp. 7,5 and 1. (His emphasis).
104. T. Cliff, 'All that Glitters is Not Gold: A Reply to Germain's 'From the A.B.C. to Current Reading: Boom, Revival, or Crisis' ', in the *Internal Bulletin* of the R.C.P., September 1947, p.14.
105. P(olitical) B(ureau), R.C.P., 'The Real Situation in Britain - A reply to the I(nternational) S(ecretariat)', in the *Internal Bulletin* of the R.C.P., March 1947, pp. 15 and 24.
106. C. Van Gelderen, 'Towards Entry: A Contribution Towards the Pre-Conference Discussion', 22nd August, 1946, in the *Internal Bulletin* of the R.C.P., pp. 8 and 10. He altered his opinion the following year.
107. P. Frank, 'The First National Conference of the R.C.P. and its Empirical Leadership', 29th August 1945, in the *Internal Bulletin* of the S.W.P., vol. viii, no. 1, January, 1946, p.4. C.f. Paul Dixon, 'Economic Revival - The Test of Experience', in the *Internal Bulletin* of the R.C.P., August 1946.
108. C.C Draft Resolution, 'Perspectives in Britain and the Orientation of the British Section of the Fourth International', in *R.C.P. Conference Documents 1946*, p.5.
109. Op. cit., n. 105 above, p.43.
110. E. Grant, 'The Bournemouth Conference - Reality and Illusion', 3rd August 1946, in *R.C.P. Conference Documents 1946*, p.7. But c.f. the extraordinarily prophetic remark on p.10 - "In a few years Aneurin Bevan or some other left faker will break with the leadership under the influence of events".
111. 'Perspectives in Britain and the Orientation of the British Section of the Fourth International', Draft Conference Resolution submitted by the Central Committee, 6th July, 1946, in *R.C.P. Conference Documents 1946*, p.10.
112. P(olitical) B(ureau) R.C.P., 'The Real Situation in Britain - A Reply to the I(nternational) S(ecretariat)', internal document of the R.C.P., March 1947, pp. 21 and 30.
113. A.A. R(udling), 'the Militant and the S.A.', R.C.P. conference document 1946, p.3.
114. Op. cit., n.113 above, p.4; the 'London Labour Party Faction Report' to the same conference listed 66 Labour Party members selling 118 *Militants* and 89 *Socialist Appeals*.
115. Karl Westwood, Speech to the Margate conference, in *Report of the 46th Annual Conference of the Labour Party*, May 26-30th 1947, p.139.
116. J. Stuart (Sam Gordon), 'Report on the R.C.P. National Conference 1946', in the *Internal Bulletin* of the R.C.P., pp. 5-6.
117. 'I.E.C. Resolution on the Tactic of the R.C.P. Towards the Labour Party', in *R.C.P. Conference Documents 1946*, pp. 18-9.
118. 'Entry Resolution', *R.C.P. Conference Documents 1946*, pp. 1-2.
119. I.S., 'A Turn Towards the Labour Party is Becoming Ever More Urgent', letter to the C.C. of the R.C.P., in the *Internal Bulletin* of the R.C.P., March 1947, pp. 8-11.
120. Pablo, "It is High Time to Find a Solution", June 1947, in the *Internal Bulletin* of the R.C.P., pp. 10-9.
121. 'Statement From the National conference of Minority Supporters Held in London on June 14th and 15th, 1947', p.2.
122. E.C. of the Entrist Faction, 'An Open Letter to the P.B.', in the *Internal Bulletin, Conference Number*, 1947, p.1.
123. 'Statement of the Political Bureau on the Minority Threat to Split the Party', 27th July, 1947, p.1.
124. E.C. of the Entrist Faction, 'A Summation of the 1947 R.C.P. National Conference', 21st July, 1947, in the *Internal Bulletin* of the R.C.P., August 1947, p.6. Apparently this document was actually written by Sam Gordon - W. Hunter, 'Mike Banda and the Bad Men Theory of History', in *Workers Press*, 15th February 1986, p.6.
125. I.E.C. Resolution Submitted by unanimous decision of a Special Commission composed of Jerome (Pablo) Haston and Robert (Jimmy Deane?)
126. 'Central Committee Resolution to go before a Special Conference'.

127. Letter of the Revolutionary Communist Party, British Section of the Fourth International to the I.E.C., 19th August, 1947, pp. 4 and 10.
128. Jock Haston, Interview with Al Richardson, 30th April, 1978.
129. Percy Downey, Interview with Sam Bornstein, 26th November, 1977.
130. Bert Atkinson, Interview with Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, 4th November, 1977.
131. Political Bureau, R.C.P., 'Open Letter to S.W.P. Members: A Reply to the Report of Comrade Stuart' (Sam Gordon), January, 1945, in the *Internal Bulletin* of the S.W.P., vol. vii, no. 3, April, 1945, p.25.
132. J. Haston, Letter to the S.W.P. from the R.C.P., 17th November 1945 in the *Internal Bulletin* of the S.W.P., vol. viii, no. 1, January 1946, pp. 7-8. C.f. M. Pablo, "This political struggle in the French and English sections after the war was led primarily by the I(nternational) S(ecretariat)". (*International Secretariat Documents 1951-4*, vol. ii, New York 1974, p.93). C.f. Kemshead, Letter to Alex Acheson, 5th September, 1955: 'We are waging our silent battle for the internal principles inside the party, and are confident of the outcome. Jimmy (i.e. Cannon) & Co. are not too pleased with the conduct of our leaders and will hold the rein tightly when they think it necessary.
133. C.C. Resolution on the Nature of the Soviet Union, 7th July, 1946: "Resolution Adopted Unanimously by the I.E.C., June 1946, On the Withdrawal of Occupation Troops; P(olitical) B(ureau), 'An Appeal for Revolutionary Integrity in Discussion: The Minority and the Demand for the Withdrawal of the Red Army From Occupied Territories', 4th August 1946, in *R.C.P. Conference Documents 1946*; J. Goffe, G. Healy, J. Lawrence, 'Statement on the Withdrawal of the Red Army', 24th August 1945, in *R.C.P. Conference Documents 1946*.
134. E. Grant, 'History of British Trotskyism', part ii (tape transcription), pp. 58-9.
135. To comment upon some of these in the context of the British movement would needlessly add to the size of our sketch. But to select one example, the behaviour of Sherry Mangan over Argentina as described in R.J. Alexander, *Trotskyism in Latin America*, Stanford, 1973, pp. 56-7 was quite unbecoming for the Secretary of Trotsky's Fourth International.
136. M. Pablo (Michel Raptis), "It is High Time to Find a Solution", internal document of the R.C.P., June 1947; 'Declaration to the 1947 Conference of the R.C.P.' Apart from the surviving leadership of the W.I.L. it was signed by John Archer (Barclay), Denzil Harber (Dixon) and Charles Van Gelderen. C.f. pp. 1-5 above.
137. 'Letter of the R.C.P., British Section of the F.I., to the I.E.C.', 19th August 1947, in the *Internal Bulletin* of the R.C.P., August 1947, pp. 5-6.
138. P(olitical) B(ureau), 'An Appeal for Revolutionary Integrity in Discussion: The Minority and the Demand for the Withdrawal of the Red Army From Occupied Territories', 4th August 1946, in *R.C.P. Conference Documents 1946*, p.5.
139. G. Healy, 'Against the Politics of Stagnation', 2nd July, 1947, p.13.
140. Jock Haston, Interview with Al Richardson, 30th April 1978.
141. 'Organisational Report of the R.C.P.', in *R.C.P. Conference Documents 1947*, pp. 2 and 8. Professional paid full-timers had fallen from 15 in 1945 to 8 in 1947, and membership from 363 in 1946 to 336 in 1947.
142. "T.U. Mis-Leaders Must Go!", in *Socialist Appeal Transport Strike Bulletin*, p.2.
143. J. Deane, "Serve the Workers - Not the Bosses", in *Socialist Appeal*, no. 42, February 1947.
144. 'Evening Standard Parliamentary Correspondent', "Minister Told Trotskyites Were Behind a Strike", in *The Evening Standard*, 6th May, 1947.
145. 'Organisational Report of the R.C.P.', in *R.C.P. Conference Documents 1947*.
146. J. Kelly, 'British Workers Set Up Councils to Meet Crisis', in *The Militant* (U.S.A.), vol. xi, no. 9, 1st March, 1947, p.1; 'Organisational Report of the R.C.P.', in *R.C.P. Conference Documents 1947*, pp. 5-6.
147. Jock Haston, Interview with Al Richardson, 30th April, 1978.
148. 'Hotel Workers: 21 Days' Strike Notice', in *Socialist Appeal*, no. 45, Mid-May 1947, p.2; M. Lunt, 'Savoy Bosses Break Agreement', in *Socialist Appeal*, no. 52, Mid-November 1947, p.1; 'Savoy Case Socialist Appeal Defence Fund', internal document of the R.C.P.,

3rd November 1947; J. Haston, 'Savoy v 'Socialist Appeal' ', in *Socialist Appeal*, no. 54, January, 1948.

149. T. Reilly, 'Party Successes in Anti-Fascist Campaign', in the *Party Organiser*, October 1947, p.2.
150. D. Garbutt, 'Smash Fascism by Workers' Action', in *Socialist Appeal*, no. 48, September 1947.
151. 'Trotskyist in Court: Refused to Abandon Pitch to Fascists', in *Socialist Appeal*, no. 51, November 1947.
152. 'Anti Fascist Poster Parade', in *Hackney and Kingsland Gazette*, 15th August 1947. C.f. also n.149 above.

Chapter Seven

Back To Stalinism: The End of The R.C.P., 1947 - 1949

The division between the Majority and the Minority left the latter free to undertake its entry policy without any constraints from the leadership of the R.C.P. Since they already had a full structure as a Faction, with an executive and the rest, the group of about eighty began to put down roots in the Labour Parties and begin their work. Their first opportunity to make a showing was at the Labour Party Conference of 17th-21st May, 1948. Hilda Lane, delegated from St. Pancras S.E. Constituency Party, described how she advised working people to “grumble within the Party, and they should come into the Party and build it up and force our decisions upon the Government”. A policy she favoured was “the withdrawal of the troops of all the nations from Central Europe in order that the people there can go forward to build up a Socialist state”,¹ since at that time the policy of the International Secretariat was to affirm that the countries of Eastern Europe were still capitalist. Harry Ratner, from Salford North, made a far better speech on the nationalisation of iron and steel, pointing out that nationalisation, so far, had meant that “the state has taken over the running of the industry for the benefit of the ex-owners”, but that what was needed was to give the workers “a real control” and “a real say in the running of their industry”, which was “the only way in which you will solve the production problem”. His motion, emasculated by an amendment favourable to the N.E.C. demanded:

“In every iron and steel plant there shall be elected a Committee of Control. This committee shall include the management and the technicians’ representatives, but only the elected workers’ representatives shall have voting powers. This Committee shall have power to examine all aspects of the Company’s activities, financial and technical, to have access to all books past *and* present relating to the business of the firm. The principle of workers’ control to be applied to all industries nationalised past and present”.²

The motion was seconded by Jack Stanley, a C.P. fellow-traveller at the head of the Constructional Engineering Union, whom the Minority were especially anxious to cultivate at this time.

During most of 1948 the Minority were busy establishing themselves inside the Labour Party, principally by the method of concealing their true politics and capturing positions. Ellis Hillman casts an interesting light upon the situation:

“Healy was arguing in favour of comrades concealing their political views, and the main job of comrades was to get into positions in the Labour Party, Trade Unions, etc., and keep one’s political position as dark as possible, and it reached the stage when one of the old comrades in the group had to protest at one of Healy’s proposals to dissolve the group altogether in the Labour Party. It was Van Gelderen.....

The only thing that was kept secret was not the policy, but the organisation. The policies of the Trotskyist movement were completely dissolved, and it was substituted by a kind of clandestine group without a serious political basis, other than total loyalty to the leadership”.³

It was not until December 1948 that they felt ready to float their journal, *Socialist Outlook*. It was edited by John Lawrence, and put forward what Hillman regarded as “a left reformist, left centrist view, which is not a criticism, but an objective interpretation of the line”.⁴ The tone was set by an article by Tom Braddock, M.P. for Mitcham, “It is Time to Change Course”, which appeared in banner headlines next to an editorial entitled ‘Back to Socialism’.⁵ In fact it was not the editorial statements that carried the line of the paper, but leading articles from M.P.s or trade union bureaucrats. As some of the comrades in the Majority R.C.P. observed, “they have a naive belief that the Lefts of the Labour Party, who are attracted to this paper, and write the main bannered articles, can be used by them in gaining a base in the Labour Party, from which a healthy rank and file Left Wing will develop’, i.e. “the politics of opportunism, doomed to failure”.⁶

Nor was it possible to isolate a consistent policy from the pages of the paper as it appeared from one month to the next. As one trade union bureaucrat replaced one or another M.P. as the main feature writer, the political line veered between left (or not so left) reformism with Fenner Brockway or Ellis Smith to unadulterated Stalinism as spouted by Tom Braddock or Jack Stanley. “It was uncritical of Zilliacus or any other odd left M.P. who happened to be in their line of contact - as it were, Gerry Healy had just had a chat with Konni Zilliacus in the bar at the House of Commons, and this could become a big issue in the *Socialist Outlook*”, observed Ellis Hillman.⁷

The perspectives of the group seem never to have been fully spelled out

in public, but they bore the authentic stamp of Healy's catastrophic expectations. "A protracted period of instability is opening up", Healy announced, affording "splendid possibilities for revolutionaries".⁸ A coalition with the Tories became "the most serious threat at the moment",⁹ and the expulsion of Konni Zilliacus from the Labour Party was connected with "the preparation for World War 3". This theory of an imminent world war was directly derived from the analysis of Pablo, whose *The Coming World Showdown* was advertised in the pages of *Socialist Outlook*¹⁰ which Healy took over as his own and elaborated upon.¹¹ The whole concept had not the slightest contact with Trotskyist ideas at all, but was a straight copy of the Stalinist propaganda that there were two blocs, one 'progressive', 'democratic', and 'peace-loving', and the other war-mongering and preparing for the holocaust:

"They are preparing, not an 'ordinary' war, but the most reactionary kind of war that we can imagine - a war against the entire world working class and the colonial peoples, those who have achieved power (the Soviet Union) those who are actively fighting for power (China and Korea) and those who, by the nature of their existence, are being driven along the same road (that is, the labour movements everywhere, including our own and that of the United States itself).....

In the first place, the existence of the two so-called blocs is a fact. Also a fact - for historical reasons for which we have not space to enter into here - the progressive *bloc*, all the forces, that is, against which America is preparing war, are at the moment led, or influenced by, the Government of the Soviet Union acting through the Communist Parties which owe it fealty. This, we hasten to add, does not mean that the Soviet Government *created* these forces, or even set them in motion. The struggles of the workers against capitalism and the colonial peoples against the abject poverty of imperialist rule, were in existence long before the Soviet Government was established. Nevertheless, it is an undeniable fact that most of the movements at present in conflict with Imperialism are, at this moment, led or at least influenced by Moscow".¹²

In anything, this accommodation to Stalinism was the most consistent feature of *Socialist Outlook*, for the whole policy was held together by the assumption that mass slump and world war were imminent, which would drive the Stalinists to the left and make them amenable to Trotskyist influence, since there was not enough time left to build revolutionary parties. Jack Stanley was able to inform its readers that Russia was peaceable, that Soviet children going to school had similar satchels to English ones, and even played similar games, whilst construction workers wore outfits "equal to, if not better than" here, and that in Russia "motor cars appear to be cheaper and more readily available than ours".¹³ But to

begin with the Minority was far more enamoured with the Yugoslav regime than that of the U.S.S.R. Healy organised a work group to send to Yugoslavia from the Labour League of Youth called 'The John MacLean Youth Work Brigade' which returned with naive, if predictable revelations:

"I think what struck us most forcibly was the enthusiasm of people. Everywhere there was an atmosphere of building, a feeling of socialist co-operation, a knowledge that work is for the benefit of the whole community. We found this spirit in the factories, in the collective farms, in State enterprises, and we found it most of all among the youth. Their enthusiasm was really startling and their capacity for work enormous".¹⁴

The adulation of Yugoslavia went to extreme lengths. Here again Hillman is most illuminating:

"Among the activities they organised in the Labour Party League of Youth were Youth Brigades to dig holes and play a part in the 'construction of Socialism', and if you read through the *Socialist Outlook* at this period and find a criticism of Tito - you must be joking!.....

Another irony of the situation is that when Pablo within a few months, after the relationship between Trotskyists and the Yugoslavs was getting soured, made a few mild criticisms of the Yugoslav regime, the first person to turn on him was Mike Banda, who denounced Pablo for criticising the Yugoslavs as undermining their relationships with their Yugoslav comrades. Now that will give you an indication of the political line that they were developing at that time. In other words, the British Section from that time until the split of 1953 was undoubtedly the Section with the least criticism of the Stalin regime than any other Section in the world. I don't think there can be any doubt about this".¹⁵

But as soon as Yugoslavia fell below expectations by assuming neutrality in the United Nations, *Socialist Outlook* was off again advertising the diplomacy of Maoist China.¹⁶ The predictable result of the pro-Stalinist thrust of these articles was a steady drain of members and supporters towards the Communist Party. John Fairhead was the first to go, and then a sympathiser in the League of Youth, Jasper Ridley.¹⁷ Some years later such long-standing Trotskyists as John Lawrence and Hilda Lane were to follow - a further turn to the wheel that lies outside the scope of this book.

Where the group did not sow Stalinist illusions, it reinforced Social Democratic ones. Kemshead told the readers of *Socialist Outlook* that "the Labour Government is in power to govern in the interests of the working people",¹⁸ and an editorial stated that the "Rank and File call for *More* Socialism - not less".¹⁹

Gerry Healy went further, joining hands with Bevan's call to make English (bourgeois) democracy more democratic:

"The tenure of Parliament is far too long in these times of rapidly changing conditions. Parliament should be re-elected by statute more often than every five years.....

This conservatorised section of the government machinery, full of prejudices against Labour, will surely have to be renovated from top to bottom and subjected to constant check and control by the working class before it can be considered halfway democratic.....

Two conclusions can be drawn from this brief survey of British democracy as it actually exists. *First*, this democracy retains some extremely antiquated features and undemocratic institutions. *Second*, even in the purely political sphere it is very remote from perfection. Many more moves will have to be taken to purify its nature and a wide gulf will have to be crossed before this restricted democracy, in which the capitalists and imperialists exercise their dictatorship behind the scenes, cedes before a genuine democracy of the working class".²⁰

Bevan himself, of course, came in for some quite uncritical adulation. "The workers have always regarded him as 'their' man in the inner councils", went one article²¹ and another asked, "Will he meet the test of the still greater courage required to make the break with American capitalism and go forward to an independent Socialist Britain that will lead in planning for a Socialist world?"²²

One of the weaknesses of British Trotskyism had always been its concept of "Two stage" entry work, whereby an inner Bolshevik core was to operate inside a centrist organisation of its own creation, which had been the case with the Marxist Group in the I.L.P. and the 'Militant Labour League' in the Labour Party. Healy took over this idea, but instead of a centrist formation consisting of Trotskyists, he set up a reformist one made up of Left Social Democrats. A report of the Labour Conference of 1948 concluded that "the main lesson of the Conference is the absolute necessity for the organisation of the Left wing", of "the widest organisation of all militants".²³

The width of this grouping can be gauged by the manner in which it came to life. One of the Labour M.P.s had written an article in *Reynolds News*. As Charlie Van Gelderen remembers it:

"He had an entirely different conception of the 'Socialist Fellowship'. He said, 'we don't sing any more'. That was the tenor of the article, and then he started the 'Socialist Fellowship'. Immediately all the loose ends rushed in. Brockway joined, we joined, Braddock came in, and turned the Socialist Fellowship into something quite different - into a political organisation, and we captured the organisation.

Emmett became the Secretary, and Lawrence edited the paper. So it became completely our organisation, and it remained so until the outbreak of the Korean War, when the split occurred and Brockway and Company walked out, and that was the end of the Fellowship really. It was a shadow after that".²⁴

The idea of the Socialist Fellowship was first announced at a fringe meeting at the Labour Party Conference in June 1949 attended by "nearly 100 M.P.s" where Ellis Smith, who was at the Board of Trade, proposed setting it up.²⁵ On 27th November it was formally launched at a Conference in the Bonnington Hotel in London, with Ellis Smith as President, Tom Braddock and Ronald Chamberlain as Vice Presidents, and a Committee including Fenner Brockway, John Lawrence, Hilda Lane, and Fred Emmett.²⁶

Its true political life was limited to ten months. In June 1950 the Korean War broke out, and the United Nations joined in on the side of the South. Almost immediately Ellis Smith, Bessie Braddock and Fenner Brockway resigned, objecting to the condemnation of the United Nations by the Fellowship.²⁷ At the same time S.O. Davies and Tom Braddock were appearing on platforms of the British-Soviet Friendship Society saying the opposite.²⁸ The Healy Group, now left with a mere front organisation of the Stalinist type, held a second conference of the Fellowship and took over what remained into full ownership, with Tom Braddock as President, Hilda Lane Vice President, Fred Emmett as National Secretary and Joe Pawsey as Assistant Secretary,²⁹ but with no noticeable change in programme. "In the absence of a genuine left wing the Healy leadership helped construct a shadow", commented Ted Grant.³⁰

Whilst Healy was busy liquidating Trotskyism in Britain, the International Secretariat was hard at work doing the same in Paris. It will be recalled that the April 1946 Pre-Conference, "the most representative the International ever had",³¹ having declared itself a formal gathering on the spot, and chosen its own International Secretariat and International Executive Committee, left them with the task of reconstructing the structure and programme of the Fourth International.³² With no more authority than they had given themselves, "the I.S. and the I.E.C. began to threaten expulsion and to legislate as if they were the product of a genuine conference".³³ They were only able to do this because of the support of the Socialist Workers Party of the United States, which had all the prestige of its pre-War association with L. Trotsky. When James P. Cannon came round to regret this a decade later it was a bit too late:

"Our relations with the leadership in Europe at that time were relations of closest collaboration and support. There was general agreement between us. These were unknown men in our party. Nobody had ever heard of them. We helped to publicise the individual leaders, we commended them to our party members, and helped to build up their prestige. We did this first, because we had

general agreement, and second because we realised that they needed our support. They had yet to gain authority, not only here but throughout the world. The fact that the S.W.P. supported them up and down the line reinforced their position and helped them to do their great work. We went so far as to soft-pedal a lot of our differences with them.....³⁴

But even the backing of Cannon was not sufficient to surmount the enormous problems that faced the international leaders of the post-war Trotskyist movement. Apart from the ideological crisis of the failure of its perspectives in 1943-7, the material basis for asserting the authority of its leadership and organising its structure simply did not exist. For a variety of reasons hardly any section of significance agreed with another, even on fundamentals. All the large European groups disagreed with the International Secretariat - the Revolutionary Communist Party, the French P.C.I., and the Italian Group, which was shortly to break away. The Committee Abroad of the German Group had come out in favour of reconstructing bourgeois democracy, the Irish section supported Shachtman, and the emigré Spanish and Vietnamese groups were in violent opposition, the one over the alleged defencism of the S.W.P. during the War, and the others over the nature of the U.S.S.R.

The first task of the new I.E.C., to convene a World Congress, was so insurmountable that it took two years to prepare. The Third Plenum of the I.E.C. meeting in March 1947 had to resort to elaborate gerrymandering to ensure that its views prevailed when the delegates came to assemble. Three categories of sections were decided upon, those of great, moderate and slight importance, with descending ratios of delegates for each, with ludicrous results. The Bolivian section, the mass party of its working class and about to form a parliamentary group, had less delegates than the American S.W.P., and the Indo-Chinese group, only recently the mass party of the Vietnamese working class, was placed in the second category. Similarly placed was the Italian Section, not much smaller than the British and French, whilst the tiny German Section found its place in the first category.³⁵ Even more incredible were the arrangements for the representation of minorities, which were allowed full vote and voice only if they came from countries of the first category and were at least a quarter of the members of the Section. This magic figure was arrived at because that was the proportion following the Minority of the R.C.P., whilst Pierre Frank had just been reduced from a majority to a minority of about a third in the French P.C.I.,³⁶ both groups supporting the line of the International Secretariat. Thus the countries of the first importance would have a voting strength of between 35 and 38% at the world congress, needing only 9 votes to secure a majority.

The extraordinary lengths to which the International leadership went to assure themselves control concealed the most alarming capitulation to

Stalinism, the demotion to the ranks of the Vietnamese Trotskyists. "Finally comes Indo-China", commented Trotsky's widow, "where support to our section has been forgotten for so long, and where even to demand who assassinated Ta Thu-Thau has been forgotten in order to support, without serious criticism, the Stalinist government of Ho Chi-Minh, greetings from whom were so warmly hailed by *The Militant* and *La Verité*".

The "deliberate calculation" of these measures, "inspired by Stalinist manoeuvres, represents a most alarming symptom", she concluded, amounting as they did to a "seizure of the International leadership interested in stifling a loyal discussion which would provoke their overthrow".³⁷

By a fine irony of history, in so reconstructing Trotsky's Fourth International the epigones ensured its destruction. Trotsky's method, the formation of an International around a programme, gave way to the most arbitrary organisational meanderings, modeled apparently on the way Zinoviev used to run the Comintern. John Goffe, who was International Treasurer some years later, gives a most apt description:

"They tended to regard themselves as playing the same kind of rôle as the Executive of the Third International did over the first four congresses - in the International Trotskyist movement! They attempted to intervene and support one faction against another, and tried to support that by any means that were available.....

They would support a tendency such as our tendency in Britain against the majority of the R.C.P., and they would try and build them up in the conception of international solidarity and correct tactics. They tried to lay down what were the correct tactics and to get support inside the country for their own view of it.....

The International Secretariat tried to play a rôle for which it was totally unsuited, of developing national movements in the direction in which it wanted them. It tried to be, in that sense, democratic centralist, to exercise an influence, which it couldn't do. Its main job should have been to try to develop the small sectarian groupings into mass movements, to develop them to get their own basis, and to act as a co-ordinating centre, rather than as the rôle which the Communist International Executive used to play in the period of the first four congresses of the Communist International. It never got away from that concept of its own rôle, of playing that function, and in that sense was totally mistaken in what it was trying to do, and the approach that it made.....

It was an entirely powerless International Secretariat without any real prestige, basing its prestige on the temporary or tacit support of those parts of the Fourth International that had any kind of 'mass basis'.....

So it was a fantasy world that they were occupied with....."³⁸

The Second World Congress, spanning the end of April and the beginning of May 1948, commenced with a protest from the delegates of the Spanish, Irish and Vietnamese groups, and the French minorities over the fact that hardly any of the documents had been circulated adequately beforehand. Brushing this aside, the congress proceeded to its main business. The chief bone of contention here was over the class nature of the states of Eastern Europe, the so-called 'buffer zone' or 'glacis' countries occupied by the Red Army, whose class structures had been gradually adapted to those of the Soviet Union. The Prague Coup had brought the last of these into line - Czechoslovakia - only weeks before the convening to the conference.

As far back as the June 1946 Plenum of the I.E.C., Mandel had rejected the argument of David Rousset that the widespread nationalisations in the buffer zone meant that these countries had become workers' states. He pointed out that extensive nationalisation had taken place there under German rule, and more afterwards for businesses owned by collaborationists or bourgeois who had otherwise fled the approach of the Russians. Nationalised property alone, he argued, did not constitute a workers' state.³⁹

This was the line adopted by the main resolution in 1948. "The *capitalist* nature of the production relations of the 'glacis' countries and the fundamental differences between their economy and that of Russia, even at the time of the N.E.P., can be clearly seen", it ran. "To deny the capitalist nature of these countries amounts to an acceptance, in no matter what form, of this Stalinist revisionist theory, it means seriously to consider the historic possibility of a destruction of capitalism by 'terror from above' without the revolutionary intervention of the masses". "The fact that capitalism still exists in these countries", it went on, "imposes the necessity of the strictest revolutionary defeatism in war time".⁴⁰

Jock Haston moved the amendments to these statements from the R.C.P. They were all to be deleted and rewritten along the following lines:

".....the economies of these countries are being brought into line with that of the Soviet Union (a). The basic overturn of capitalist property relations has already been, or is in the process of being, completed (b) The capitalist control of the government and the apparatus of the state has been, or is in the process of being, destroyed (c) This process of assimilation is the necessary and inevitable product of the class character of the Russian economy, and the preponderance of the Russian state is the dominant military force in the existing relations....."⁴¹

The amendments were rejected overwhelmingly by conference, oblivious alike to the obvious resemblances with the Soviet economy, or the Marxist theory of the state. They forgot totally that a war between states of different class character partakes of the nature of an international civil war, that the state is armed men standing in defence of property, and that the armed men

in Eastern Europe, since 1945, had been those of the Soviet Union. They even failed to recall that the bourgeois revolution was spread through Europe, in the first place, by the bayonets of Napoleon's troops rather than by separate revolutions in each country, or that Trotsky had demonstrated that Stalin had done the same with the Soviet Union's class relations in Eastern Poland in 1939. Even the fate of the bourgeois politicians in the puppet states failed to sway them. As Shachtman observed, "while the British hailed the (Prague) coup as a victory for the working class, the rest of the official Trotskyist press hailed it as a victory for the bourgeoisie which, with inexcusable perversity, was celebrating its triumph by jumping or being thrown out of high windows onto the pavement below".⁴² "With the foretaste already offered to us, we await with lively interest this centenary supplement to the Communist Manifesto of 1848", was the comment of one journalist.⁴³

The theory of the Fourth International, then, at the time of the Stalin-Tito split, was that Russia was a workers' state which must be defended, but that Yugoslavia was a bourgeois state towards which the strictest attitude of revolutionary defeatism was to be observed. Then, on the 28th June 1948, the Cominform issued its public denunciation of Tito, and what had been going on behind the scenes for some time was now under the gaze of the world. Inside of a fortnight the Cominform was denouncing the Yugoslavs for "slandorous propaganda, borrowed from the arsenal of counter-revolutionary Trotskyism"⁴⁴ and a year later Laszlo Rajk was on the stand at a purge trial confessing that "the Trotskyites occupy leading positions in Yugoslavia".⁴⁵ The British Communists supplied an immediate echo about "shameless reactionary propaganda of the type used by Goebbels and the Trotskyists", and that "Titoism represents the revival of Trotskyism in new and more dangerous forms".⁴⁶ The task of making something coherent out of all this was delegated to James Klugman, who solemnly informed his audiences that "police spies before the War, in several countries, used to receive lessons in Trotskyite doctrine",⁴⁷ and that purge victim Traicho Kostov was "an active member of the Leftist Trotskyite faction inside the Bulgarian Communist Party".⁴⁸ All these wild and fraudulent assertions were gathered together into a two hundred-odd page book that has since been recognised as a classic of its type.⁴⁹

Although Tito had slaughtered the Belgrade Trotskyists early on in the course of his guerilla warfare,⁵⁰ and his aides accused the Cominform of using Trotskyite methods,⁵¹ the extensive Soviet propaganda far outclassed Yugoslavia's feeble efforts, and the working class movement began to feel that there might be some truth behind the accusations. Even more to the point, so did the International Secretariat. Without any warning, and without any abandoning of its previous position that Yugoslavia was a capitalist country, the International Secretariat rushed in to give its enthusiastic support to Tito. A first 'open letter' promised success "only if you persevere on the road of Socialist revolution", congratulated the

Yugoslavs on the “victorious resistance by a revolutionary workers’ party against the Kremlin machine”, and ended up with “Long Live the Yugoslav Socialist Revolution!”⁵² A second letter, complained that the Russians, “accuse your party of its lack of democracy”, called on Communists of all countries to send delegations, and asked for them to accept one from the Fourth International “to make close contact with the Yugoslav Communist Movement to knit close fraternal ties with you”. It ended with a ringing appeal:

**“YUGOSLAV COMMUNISTS, LET US UNITE OUR EFFORTS
FOR A NEW LENINIST INTERNATIONAL FOR THE WORLD
VICTORY OF SOCIALISM”.**⁵³

This zigzag was not only worthy of Stalin himself, but even directly imitated him. Before the Stalin/Tito split Communist propaganda was full of the usual utopian rubbish about Yugoslav life: afterwards Yugoslavia suddenly became not only a capitalist state, but even a Fascist one. The Cominform accused the Yugoslavs of bourgeois nationalism. If the International Secretariat had been true to its previous analysis - that Yugoslavia had been a capitalist state - they would have been obliged to agree with it. “If the I.S. developed any clear conclusion from its position that Yugoslavia is a capitalist state”, argued Bill Hunter, “then it must accept this characterisation of the struggle”.⁵⁴ More to the point, the sycophancy of these letters had invalidated the whole of the Trotskyist position. If the Yugoslav Communist Party really had been a revolutionary workers’ party, if it had carried through a Socialist revolution, if the Yugoslav Communist party really was democratic, if the new Leninist International was yet to be built, then there was neither point nor justification in the existing Fourth International. The truth was quite otherwise. The Yugoslav Communist Party was Stalinist to the core; it was not a workers’ party, but a peasant guerilla warfare organisation; only workers can carry through a true Socialist revolution; and the state set up by Tito and his men was already bureaucratised from birth. As Natalia Trotsky wrote angrily to those who usurped her husband’s memory, “your entire press is now devoted to an inexcusable idealisation of the Titoist bureaucracy for which no ground exists in the tradition and principles of our movement”.⁵⁵ The R.C.P. was trenchant and prophetic: “We cannot fail to comment here that your uncritical letter to the Yugoslav Communist Party precisely lends weight to the point of view that Tito is an ‘unconscious Trotskyist’ ”.⁵⁶ For, in fact, the International Secretariat took over this repellant paradox, refurbished it, and applied it to a succession of Stalinist dynasts in the years to come, including Mao Tse-Tung and Fidel Castro. There were ‘unconscious Trotskyists’, of course, but they tended to be in Stalinist jails.

The R.C.P. Majority found little difficulty in analysing these new events, since it followed on logically from the analysis of Eastern Europe it had defended at the Second World Congress in 1948. “The I.S. itself has not

found it possible to maintain the line of the World Congress", they pointed out, for the new propaganda "makes nonsense of the position that Yugoslavia is a capitalist state".⁵⁷ Its own view worked out by Grant was along the following lines:

"Under 'normal' conditions such a struggle (peasant guerilla warfare) can only have ended in the victory of the bourgeoisie and the possibility of land reform, even if carried to a successful conclusion. But the dominating factors of our epoch lie in the victory of 'October' and the distortion of the revolution by the bureaucracy. On the one hand, the background of a strong 'workers' state' (even though in a degenerated form) and on the other the frightful decay of capitalism - imperialism on a world scale and the incapacity of the local bourgeoisie to solve a single one of the national or democratic problems facing the country, served to push the masses in the direction of the socialist revolution..... The peasants cannot play an independent rôle. They must follow one or other of the basic classes in modern society.....

The regime remains that of a Yugoslav variant of Russian Stalinism. Stalinism means a totalitarian regime with a privileged bureaucratic caste superimposed on the economic base of the workers' state. With this or that difference, with this or that modification, nevertheless the regime in Yugoslavia resembles that of Russia, just as the Dollfuss regime in little Austria resembled that of Hitler and Mussolini".⁵⁸

Grant indicated that clear evidence already existed to show that Tito's state was conforming to the strictest Stalinist norms of behaviour, albeit on a microcosmic scale:

"The only difference between the regimes of Stalin and Tito is that the latter is still in its early stages. *There is a remarkable similarity in the first upsurge of enthusiasm in Russia, when the bureaucracy introduced the First Five-Year Plan, and the enthusiasm in Yugoslavia today.....*

Events in Yugoslavia, amazingly, recapitulated the phases which the Stalinist bureaucracy went through, even to the extent of the opportunism in relation to the peasants, followed by panic measures against the Kulaks and small proprietors in the towns. Already the first 'sabotage' trials have taken place where Tito puts responsibility for any deficiencies in the plan, on the shoulders of his opponents. Similarly, we have the pattern of the Russian 'confession' trials on a smaller scale. The familiar outlines of the Stalinist police state are clear to see. The differences are superficial, the fundamental traits the same".⁵⁹

It followed that any support of Trotskyists to Yugoslavia in the clash with

Stalin was purely on grounds of support for national self determination, as Trotsky had supported the independence of the Ukraine against the great Russian oppression of the Soviet state.

For the United Secretariat, however, the defence of Yugoslavia against Stalin was "within the framework of our appreciation of the workers' movement in this country, of the origins of its state and the overtly revolutionary possibilities of this workers' movement" which made the state approach "most closely the Soviet structure". But they still had to explain away their previous opinion that the rest of Eastern Europe remained capitalist. For this purpose they worked out a theory that what they had regarded as bourgeois states were gradually becoming workers' states, "capitalist countries on the road of structural assimilation with the U.S.S.R.", but which "constitute, today, the pattern of a hybrid and transitory society in full transformation, with outlines still unclear and imprecise, from which it is extremely difficult to summarise their fundamental character in a concise formula", but which would require a civil war to reverse the process.⁶⁰ That left them free to deny that they were wrong in 1948 to regard the states as capitalist, but to claim sometime later that they had since become workers' states.

Apart from the flat dishonesty involved in this position, it threw out of the window the class theory of the state, one of the essentials of Marxist analysis, by claiming that it was possible for a bourgeois state to become a workers' state through a process of 'structural assimilation', without a violent rupture at the level of the state apparatus. If this theory were conceded, then there was no reason for Trotskyists to differentiate themselves from Social Democrats, let alone from Stalinists. Indeed, the Stalinists could be said to have been well in advance of these revolutionary leaders, for they already believed that the process was completed, whereas the International Secretariat continued in 1949 to "deny even now, as the Stalinists do not any longer, the *complete identity* of the two regimes, and because we maintain that *qualitative differences* still continue to exist".⁶¹

The R.C.P. thesis was not only logically worked out and coherent in all its parts, but it had that predictive value that ensures the scientific character of Marxism. The Soviet aim, argued Grant and Haston, was to "accept the nominal independence of these states, but to try so to organise their internal regimes and arrange their relations with each other, as to ensure that the real control is centred in Moscow", whilst utilising the "diplomatic and economic advantages" of their "nominal independence". Forseeing the change in relations after Stalin's death they noted that "far from attacking the real crimes of the Stalinist bureaucracy, it appears that Tito will try to arrive at some compromise".⁶²

But the International Secretariat blundered on. Having previously failed to see that Yugoslavia was a workers' state at all, they now ignored all the signs of Stalinism and took the regime at its word. Being obliged to accept Yugoslavia as a workers' state, they were forced to concede the same to the

rest of Eastern Europe, however reluctantly. But they stuck out to the end and refused to believe that the same could happen in the case of China. As Haston recalls:

"I remember that one of the debates at that time was when the news came that the Stalinists had stopped the Red Army, at the other side of the Yangtse, at one stage. And their argument was that the Stalinists had sold out to Chiang Kai-shek and to the Imperialists, and were making a deal in order to get concessions, etc, etc. We had a Chinese delegate whom I hadn't seen before, and haven't seen since, and he was the guy who was telling us that the Stalinists were selling out, and they were handing over to Chiang Kai-shek, and by the time we came out of the conference in which this was the line, the Stalinists had actually crossed the bloody Yangtse and slaughtered Chiang Kai-shek. The whole ultra-left nonsense was too much for me, and it was a very disillusioning experience. It was disillusioning because they wouldn't recognise reality".⁶³

Here again, when the unthinkable did take place, it took years to accept what was apparent on all hands. It was the middle fifties before the American S.W.P. accepted that a social change had happened, for they used the same methods to evaluate it as they had done in the case of Eastern Europe. Grant, however, was able to describe the exact process even before it began:

"Manoeuvring between the classes, they will establish a firm and strong state machine. Basing themselves now on the peasants, now on the workers, then on the bourgeoisie, to serve different ends, they will balance between them now as 'arbiter' and regulator of the relations between the classes. Inevitably they will move on to the confiscation of private ownership in industry and then at a later stage to the expropriation of the peasantry as well, on the model of Russia and Eastern Europe".⁶⁴

He was even able to sketch out the causes of the future Sino-Soviet split by noting that "the danger of a new and really formidable Tito in China is a factor which is causing anxiety in Moscow".⁶⁵

The ideological failure of the post-war 'reconstruction' of the Fourth International, in 1945-49, robbed Trotskyism of its one sure asset: its ability to make sense of the events of the day and to intervene accordingly. It had refused to accept the new states that had been formed in Europe for more than five years; caught unawares by the Stalin/Tito clash, it tried to rationalise the process afterwards; all sorts of evasions had been practiced to maintain its pose of revolutionary leadership; the method of Marxism had been discarded in favour of the most vulgar empiricism. The ground had been laid for its future prostration before one Stalinist dictator after another (and some that were not even Stalinist), a policy that continues with regard

to Cuba, where 'workers' democracy' does not allow a word in edgeways in the course of a four hour speech.

The Fourth International, like the first three, was an organisation founded as the instrument of a programme. Once the programme is liquidated, the organisation logically follows. It was a mere five years before Pablo, who had condemned the suggestion of entrism as a world wide tactic as "dilettantism which can only disorientate the militants and destroy the movement",⁶⁶ was laying it down as policy, provoking the first really international split with the American S.W.P.⁶⁷ long foretold by Felix Morrow when he had denied that "the French Majority and the S.W.P. majority are political groupings of the same type".⁶⁸ This was to be only the first of an unending series of splits, unifications, and further splits that has made up the small change of the evolution of the various 'Fourth Internationals' ever since.

The ideological crisis of Trotskyism internationally mirrored the process at work in the sections. Activity in the trade unions dropped lower and lower, and the 150 comrades in the Majority found one avenue after another closed off between themselves and the working class. *Socialist Appeal* became much reduced in size, and *Workers International News* came out irregularly and duplicated. The only method of addressing the class came to be voluntary lecturing for the N.C.L.C.,⁶⁹ which in the end led to Haston and Ward taking on the jobs of organisers for that body. Haston's commitment began to fall off, and he became increasingly inactive. The perspective of a boom for what had been a highly activist organisation was bound to lead to adjustments. In Frank Ward's words:

"We burned ourselves out in that sort of activity. We had anticipated an immensely rapid blow-up, and once that didn't become possible, in no way was it possible to see your life stretching ahead and the lives of your similar co-thinkers stretching ahead at that sort of tempo, in a flitting-around sort of system. Either one had to settle for a far longer term perspective or choose your own niche and your own area, and there was a certain odd element in the discussion towards the end of the break-up of the R.C.P. on the rôle of the individual".⁷⁰

Obviously the uncertainty spread by the International Secretariat had a lot to do with the disillusion, for their sudden reversals over Eastern Europe seemed to suggest either that Trotskyists had no rôle to play, or that their analyses were no longer valid. In June 1948, Tony Cliff brought out the first edition of his *Russia: A Marxist Analysis* as a special issue of the internal bulletin and *Workers International News*.⁷¹ It took over and elaborated Haston's theories about étatism, combining with them his first tentative reappraisal of Russia as a capitalist state. Ted Grant replied to it in two installments giving the case for continuing to consider that Russia was a workers' state.⁷² An altogether different answer to the same problem of the spread of Stalinism was given by David James. Taking his cue from the

International Secretariat, he pointed out that the revolution - of whatever class or caste - was being spread by Stalinism, that "objectively it is Tito (and Gomulka, and tomorrow perhaps Mao Tse-tung) who expresses the programme of Trotskyism unconsciously, in a distorted form", and that "the Fourth International has been by-passed". Noting that Stalinist features existed in Yugoslavia from the first, he questioned as to whether they were not, in fact, the formative features of such a state, or that we can talk of 'degeneration' from birth. The logic was thus to try to influence the Stalinist organisations, whose members "view them with reason as the only real forces challenging the capitalist system".⁷³ He was answered by Grant, who tried to show how peasant revolution produced such states of a type necessarily deformed from the start:

"The peasant movement, Marxism teaches, must find a leadership in the cities either in the bourgeoisie or in the proletariat. Where it is the bourgeoisie, then of course we have a capitalist development. Where the proletariat take the lead then we have the socialist revolution. Here we have a peculiar variant of the latter in that the peasant movement has a centralised leadership in the form of the Stalinist Party, which has roots in Moscow. Basing itself on the peasantry, it enters the towns not with the aim and outlook of a genuine Communist Party, but with the aim of establishing its power *by manoeuvring between the classes*. It does so by transferring its social basis to the proletariat - not as the direct representative of the proletariat as would a Bolshevik Party - but in a Bonapartist manner.....

Stalinism is a Bonapartism that bases itself on the proletariat and the institution of state ownership, but is as different from the norm of a workers' state as fascism or bonapartism differs from the norm of bourgeois democracy, which is the freest expression of the economic domination and rule of the bourgeoisie.....

Stalinism makes a coalition under conditions *where the back of the bourgeoisie has been broken in order to play off the bourgeoisie against the danger of an insurgent proletariat*".⁷⁴

Frank Ward's pessimism went deeper. Unimpressed with what he called the "sometimes ludicrous, sometimes tragic stupidities" of the "phrase-mongering parrot-like ideas" of the International Secretariat, he decided that "the arguments of the centrists against the premature formation of an International organisation, as distinct from a contact centre, must be recognised as having been basically correct". This being the case, "the formative period of the F(ourth) I(nternational) needs to be continued", and that a return to the slogan of the thirties was the correct policy - "For the Fourth".⁷⁵ He failed to rally any support from the organisation, however, despite its misgivings about the International leadership.⁷⁶

By December Haston was quite demoralised, and proposed entry into

the Labour Party. When he failed to gain support he decided to resign his position as Secretary and argue his case from the ranks. At this point Harold Atkinson, who had gone into commerce, returned from the United States and decided that this would be a catastrophe, and persuaded others on the political bureau to support Haston on the question of entry. Just before Christmas 1948 they issued a document admitting that the R.C.P.'s perspectives had failed, reducing it to "a propaganda grouping" offering "no perspective of growth and expansion in the coming period". They were convinced that "in the next period there is no possibility of creating a third workers' party separate from and in organisational opposition to the Labour and Communist parties", so that "without illusions, and with the perspective of several years of patient work" they proposed "the dissolution of the R.C.P. as an independent organisation and the entry of its members into the Labour Party".⁷ With the exception of Ted Grant and Jimmy Deane this policy gained the support of the Political Bureau, which now admitted that the open party orientation had been "wrong from the moment that Labour broke the coalition, took power and commenced its term of office by carrying out its programme", and that further work as an open group would "offer only further retrenchments, further decline in public activity, further retreats to an isolated propaganda sect". The prospects for inside work were far from rosy either, as they did not come to the Labour Party with Healy's illusions of imminent cataclysm:

"It is now our opinion that it is wrong to wait until the Labour Party milieu is in ferment, then step into the left wing already formed and hope to take over the leadership. It is clearly an illusion to imagine that workers will follow us merely on the basis of our ideas. The workers will follow us when they have learned to trust us in the course of working together.....

We cannot, of course, build the revolutionary left wing in conditions which are not favourable for its formation. But we can create a basis for our tendency by building up a cadre of national and local leaders and crystallise the left critics who undoubtedly exist in the Labour Party.....

The whole nature of the objective situation determines that we face a period of hard and patient work. We hold no illusions of rapid growth. It is rather a question of building up over the next period a revolutionary trend in the labour movement which will form the basis for the future".⁷⁸

Since there were no proposals for sorts of action, for forms of propaganda, for alternative types of organisation, it was plain that this was a recipe for liquidation, not a perspective for entry. "Their proposal of entry looks like a desperate man drowning himself in deep water", commented the I.S., for "entry on such a pessimistic and liquidationist line as proposed in the

document would only accelerate the process of political disintegration and destroy all perspective for the Fourth International".⁷⁹

The feeling of outrage and sense of betrayal went deep into the hundred or so comrades of the R.C.P. Left. Ordinary members who had not expressed themselves to date, voiced their anger with the volte-face of the leadership and the abandonment of the Open Party orientation. Tom Dunmore in Northampton blamed "white collar workers" rising to the top of the R.C.P., denied that there was any reason for entering the Labour Party "except the faint-heartedness of the Central Committee", and proposed "not Total Entry into the Labour Party but total entry into the factories and the trade unions".⁸⁰ Johnny Mann of Glasgow believed that the mistake was Lenin's to begin with, in advocating the policy of 'Labour to Power', and that the entry which flowed from it was erroneous.⁸¹ Bill Cleminson held that the Labour Party was "being by-passed by militants using their T(rade) U(nions) and shop committees as the vehicles for their criticisms" and broke out angrily against the Central Committee:

"We find a leadership that in the past year has issued not one single political document or directive, a leadership that has wangled out of facing up to the membership by delaying Conference from August to December to Easter to when? And when finally finding themselves trailing in the wake of the organisation say 'Let's drown ourselves in the most stagnant pool in British politics - the Labour Party' ".⁸²

The indignation of the R.C.P.'s working class rank and file led to the formation of the 'Open Party Faction' on 14th February 1949, announced by Alf Snobel, Sam Levy, Marion Lunt, George and Sheila Leslie, Charlie Sisley, Geoff Carlson, Arthur Deane, Norman Pentland, J. Ross, Nettie Snobel and one of the authors. They considered that "entry into the L(about) P(arty) advocated when the conditions for entry do not obtain constitutes the politics of despair and suicide", for when there was no leftward movement, there was no mass base from which to resist Transport House from getting rid of any left opposition that showed signs of menacing their regime". Moreover, "acceptance of entry must include as a *fundamental condition* of entry the existence of the Healy Minority", with which conflict "could only be a sterile internal fight transferred into the L(about) P(arty)".⁸³ The old entrists, the Healy Group, had "not progressed in the Labour Party", and still clung to "their threadbare fallacious economic and political prognosis of economic crisis and progressive radicalisation of the workers, despite their very obvious refutation by history", whereas for Haston and Tearse, "imbued with pessimism", entry had become "a question of self-preservation, pure and simple, when shorn of all the embellishments and trimmings they have wrapped it up in". They advocated, instead, concentrating in the industrial field, the trade union branches, shop stewards' committees, and the trades

councils. The concept of entry supported by the Open Party Faction was more a short-term operation of the Stalinist type:

“Entry - for how long? All previous experience has taught us that periods of inertia, of political inactivity within the L.P. can last for years; but that political activation, periods of polarisation of the forces of the L.P. endure but a relatively short period. This is essentially determined by the nature of the developing opposition. But whether the bureaucracy expels the left wing or the Trotskyists (or other leaders of the opposition) tear it away as the beginning of a mass basis for its own organisation, the struggle is a sharp, fierce, but *short* one.

So in its very essence entry is a short-term perspective, when looked at in its true light.....”

Along with this concept inevitably grew up an ultra-left attitude, almost a fear of contamination by what they would have to deal with in the Labour Party. “It would be the crassest folly,” they wrote, “to plunge the whole R.C.P. into the foetid swamp and expose the membership to the overpowering vapours of the L(about) P(arty)”.⁸⁴

This in turn meant a retreat to the old position of a purely propaganda group, discarded by the movement in the thirties, as against an interventionist organisation. “In the first place, that we were ever a party in the understood sense of the term is a fable”, they pointed out (correctly): “At best during our most favourable period during the latter part of the War we were a large agitational group, with a certain amount of support, but we were not a party.”⁸⁵

The R.C.P. was now evenly split, with Haston and the old leadership for entry supported by a quarter of the organisation and the Open Party Faction taking in another quarter. The rest remained undecided. At this point Ted Grant, George Hanson and Jimmy Deane, who had resisted the entry perspective on the Political Bureau and the Central Committee, suddenly changed sides. Giving it as their opinion in any case that “even under the best conditions with a unified leadership imbued with confidence in the tactic, only small gains could be made in the immediate period ahead”, they now came out for entry:

“The discussion has not convinced us that in the present situation entry would constitute a superior tactic. However, faced with the fact that the overwhelming majority of the leadership and the trained cadres, and substantial sections of the rank and file are in favour of entering the Labour Party, and given that the objective situation will be a difficult one for the Party, we believe that a struggle would be sterile”.⁸⁶

Such a complete abdication of the responsibilities of revolutionary leadership spread a deep feeling of disgust among the working class

supporters of the 'open' view. "I think that they played a bloody despicable part, inasmuch as they were in possession of the means of communication", commented George Leslie; "Grant and Deane were professionals, and when they sold the idea that the Party should accept Haston's line, well that was the end of the road, it was".⁸⁷ The influence of Grant swung over the majority of the organisation to the idea of entry, and covered up for the rest of the old leadership who were on their way out of the movement. In Sam Levy's words:

"In a certain sense I was more annoyed at Grant rather than Haston, who was already on his way out - my illusions in Haston had been declining for some time. Tearse supported the idea of a long stabilisation period for capitalism, but was evasive when challenged on it. Grant, Hanson and Jimmy Deane acted as a bridge to Haston and were disliked more - especially when they all came out with an entry perspective. They were going in for the politics of liquidation, and even tried to disguise it when Pablo challenged them on it! Not a single leader of the old Majority was against entry then! Grant was hoping that Haston would not, in fact, leave and Grant was in effect papering over it. It was a question of leadership: many could not see any alternative to the old leadership and followed them into the Labour Party reluctantly".⁸⁸

The only stumbling block that remained was the relationship with the old minority now running the *Socialist Outlook* in the Labour Party. The R.C.P. comrades, left outside after 1947, still took in the majority of Trotskyists in this country, and would have dominated any fused organisation. Grant in particular was opposed to fusion on any other basis. But Healy, supported by the International Secretariat, refused to allow fusion with the old Majority unless he was given a majority on the leading bodies of the new organisation. In his view the perspective of entry espoused by the Minority entitled them to the political leadership of the new organisation, especially as they had pioneered the tactic and became established within the Labour Party. The Open Party Faction had already decided that if entry became inevitable it could not be carried on by two separate groups facing each other in factional conflict. It was necessary to "press for discussion with the old Minority before fusion",⁸⁹ and in any case "two officially recognised sections of the 4th International for one country, both pursuing the same tactic, is preposterous and will not be countenanced by the I(nternational) S(ecretariat)".⁹⁰ This was true enough, for Jacques Privas, the I.S. representative, threatened that the Majority R.C.P. group would be disaffiliated from the Fourth International if they went into the Labour Party and refused to fuse with the Healy group on his terms. Reluctantly the Majority agreed on the assurance that a conference of the fused group would elect new leading bodies by normal democratic procedure during the following year.

The last meeting of the Revolutionary Communist Party was a special

conference held to wind up the organisation at its Harrow Road offices from the 4th to the 6th June, 1949. Kamalesh Bannerjee attended as observer for the International Secretariat and Sam Goldberg on behalf of Healy's group. Apart from adopting a resolution of support and adherence to the Fourth International, the only item of discussion was the dissolution of the R.C.P., entry into the Labour Party, and fusion with the Healy Minority on the dictated terms. A month later the last 'Special Issue' of *Socialist Appeal* was a two page leaflet announcing the end of the Revolutionary Communist Party, as well as of a whole era of Trotskyism in Britain:

"After a two-day debate, this full representative Conference decided, by a substantial majority, to dissolve the organisation and call upon members of the Party to enter the Labour Party - to which the majority already pay the Trade Union political levy - as individual members. Within the Labour Party they would carry on the fight for the overthrow of the capitalist system and for a Socialist Britain.....

There is dissatisfaction among wide sections of the working class with the policy of the Labour Government. They reflect this, however, not by seeking for a new or more revolutionary organisation, but by striving to exert pressure through their established mass political organisation - the Labour Party. They see no alternative in small Left-wing groupings outside the Labour Party. The perspective for Socialists must therefore be to join the ranks of the politically conscious workers inside the Labour Party and try to orientate its policy along truly Socialist lines....."

We would prefer to have the right to enter the Labour Party as an organised body, affiliated in the same manner as the Fabian Society and other organisations. But this is not possible owing to the 1946 decision of the Labour Party regarding organisations seeking affiliation. We have therefore dissolved our organisation and will fight as individual members, within the framework of the Constitution of the Labour Party, for the policy outlined above. By dissolving the Revolutionary Communist Party and entering the Labour Party as individual members we consider we will best play our part in aiding the British workers to reach their socialist goal. We appeal to all friends and sympathisers to take this step together with us. Our members are confident that by such a step they ensure their fullest participation in the development of the British working class and that in the common struggle for Socialism together with other members of the Labour Party, the correctness of our ideas can be demonstrated".⁹¹

Two of the full-timers, Jock Haston and Frank Ward, became organisers for the N.C.L.C. The others entered the Labour Party, where activity was

indeed at a low ebb, and found a cold douche of reality waiting for them. As Sheila Leslie remembers:

"Well, I joined the East Islington Labour Party. I did go in, you see, and they had been warned, actually..... They'd been told of all the Trotskyists in the area, and when to expect them - Oh, the Labour Party was right up to date!..... Anyway, I became the Assistant Secretary of the Constituency in which, of course, I was completely inundated with work..... but I became so disgusted with it, because the more you did, the more you became part of the machine, and you could see what it all was.....

At Transport House, the Deputy, Bill Jones, told us that he was looking out for the Trotskyists to come in - and of course, when we came in he was quite willing. There were a couple of wards that hadn't been organised because there was no-one to do the work. So they came with a pack of cards and addresses and sent us round on the beat organising the local wards! You see, he was jolly clever - when I look back at it, yes - very funny".⁹²

Less than amusing was the fate of the R.C.P. comrades when they joined the Healy Minority, which by this time was a tight and secretive organisation calling itself 'The Club'. Because they still made up a majority of the new group, Healy had about a year to use the apparatus to smash his opponents before the next conference. With a bit of luck the old leadership - or enough of them - would desert, leaving the rank and file without prospects and bewildered. His opportunity came when Jock Haston resigned from the movement in February 1950. When his 'expulsion' was moved in the Political Bureau of 'The Club' a month later, Grand sadly abstained. Haston's reasons contained in a letter to the members made it plain that he was breaking with the group on a purely reformist basis. Claiming that "the critical spirit which animated our movement during the early 30's is dead", only to be replaced by an "abysmal failure to analyse the great changes following the Second World War", he now rejected "the thesis that the Labour Party cannot under any circumstances be the instrument of socialist emancipation and that only through the form of soviets can a transformation of society take place in Britain", and revised his view that "it is historically and practically necessary to form a tightly disciplined, secret organisation, separate from the mass party of the working class".⁹³ A whole layer of the old R.C.P. leaders left about the same time, including Frank Ward, George Hanson, Alex Riach, Harold Atkinson and Heaton Lee. Since Haston was delegate of the British Section, he was also expelled from the International Executive Committee at its 8th Plenum, which put down his "shameful desertion" to "all the opportunist and liquidationist policy and of the hostility to the International which Haston, at the head of the ex-R.C.P., has personally shown during the whole of the last years", and that his leaving Trotskyism was a reflection of "the pressure of the class enemy on

the ideologically weaker and more confused elements in the International". More important, as far as Healy was concerned, was the approval given by the I.E.C. to "all the measures of revolutionary discipline taken by the English leadership against the deserters for the safeguarding of the programme and the organisation".⁹⁴ For Healy was now to demand that all Haston's old friends in the group should break off personal relations with him, and that in true Stalinist manner he had to be driven right out of the labour movement and "especially out of the National Council of Labour Colleges".⁹⁵ When Roy Tearse refused he was also expelled.⁹⁶

Healy was just getting into his stride. Up and down the country he went, dissolving, amalgamating and splitting branches apart at will. When Cliff wrote a document for his tendency at conference, and was expelled before it met, his remaining supporters were denied the right to present it. The Liverpool group in solidarity with Ted Grant, was not allowed the publication of its document at all.⁹⁷ A week before Conference, in August 1950, Ted Grant's expulsion was moved, and it was carried through two months afterwards because he refused to approve of the Conference's treatment of Cliff's group and the gross violation of its democratic rights.⁹⁸ Jimmy Deane was out not long afterwards, for opposing *Socialist Outlook*, and wholesale ejections of Cliff's supporters went through for refusing to support the North during the Korean War. When Percy Downey told the Birmingham Trades Council that the War was "a struggle between Russian Imperialism on the one hand and American Imperialism on the other" he was removed, along with five others who refused to endorse the measures taken against him.⁹⁹ Bill Cleminson and the Sheffield group were thrown out. The crowning folly was to threaten expulsion to all who refused to accept a document both "inaccurate and on a theoretically low level"¹⁰⁰ along the following lines:

"The perspective for the revolutionary forces, internationally and in Britain, remains extremely favourable. The mutual crisis of world imperialism and Stalinism opens up great possibilities for the building of mass parties.....

The conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States is therefore fundamental and is the basic antagonism in the world today. Economic necessity compels the United States towards an armed showdown with the Soviet Union and the colonial revolution.....

A correct conclusion is that Imperialism is being forced to prepare for, and then embark upon, a world war *under extremely unfavourable conditions for world capitalism*.....

The future holds out the prospect of an *international civil war* in which the Fourth International will have every opportunity to lead the workers of the world to victory".¹⁰¹

Not without reason did Sam Levy grumble that "in the old R.C.P. the level was higher than it is in the group today",¹⁰² for it would never have been

accepted that the "basic antagonism" was not that of working class and capital internationally, but of the confrontation of Stalinism and imperialism.

Meanwhile Healy's purge proceeded apace. Sam Levy, who was supporting Ted Grant and Jimmy Deane in trying to salvage something out of the wreckage, arranged an open debate between Grant and Cliff, and when Healy's group got to know of it they invited him to a 'special meeting' that same night. When they arrived he wasn't at home, and "after that there was a Central Committee meeting at which they purged first of all Anil Moonesingh and then me".¹⁰³ Ted Grant's expulsion from the Fourth International was ratified at the Third World Congress of 1951 on the motion of Ernest Mandel. By this time over 90% of the supporters of the Majority of the R.C.P. between 1947 and 1949 were out of the Trotskyist movement, either hounded out by Healy or dropped out in disillusion.¹⁰⁴ Healy finally gained his majority, and the revenge for which he had waited ten years.

The close parallel between the methods employed by Healy during this period, and the ideas he was espousing, is neatly encapsulated in the way in which one of the authors came to be ejected at that time:

"I was in Paris on holiday in the Summer of 1950 when the P.C.I. (the French Section) organised groups of young members and sympathisers into work camps to spend a month in Yugoslavia. They were to work for two weeks on some building project or other, and the next couple of weeks seeing the sights. I linked up with a group of people in Paris consisting of French, Indo-Chinese and Chinese comrades, to go to Yugoslavia. We were to go to Zagreb, where the foundations were being laid for the new university which was to be completed in 1956.

The economic situation in the country was grim. Two years had passed since the break with Moscow. The Americans and the West had still not concluded any trade deals, and a seven month drought brought severe food shortages. These were the conditions in which the leadership of the Fourth International decided to launch its solidarity campaign. There were groups to go from every country in Western Europe. Being in France at the time, I joined the French Group.

Yugoslavia at first sight was quite impressive. The tremendous amount of reconstruction taking place after our post-war experiences in France and Britain gave us a feeling of sympathy and tolerance for their problems. In Zagreb we were doing a day's work as building labourers, and when the day was over there were planned visits to collective farms, factories, penal institutions and so on. There was no pressure put on us to go to these places.

The local people were hospitable, and often invited us home. I had

a smattering of German, and as German was the second language for most people I had few difficulties in getting around.

My main difficulties were with the comrades I was working with, who listened starry-eyed to the tales of our guides and interpreters. Almost from my first day I queried the huge portraits of Tito all over the place. I was told that Tito was loved by Yugoslavs, who insisted on his portrait even if up in the mountains and adorned with lights. When I made the obvious comment 'Just like the Russians love Stalin' it was a French comrade who nudged me not to embarrass the brigade with that kind of question. It became steadily worse when I pointed out some shabbily-dressed rank and file soldiers saluting their smartly-dressed off-duty officers, and when I learned that the pay differential was twenty to one for the lower ranking officers and as much as seventy to one for the senior ranks, I pointed out that this was much worse than in the British Army.

I met Mandel in Zagreb. He was knowledgeable about the amount of steel produced, but obviously walked the streets with his eyes shut. Later, in Paris I discussed the soldiers saluting off-duty in the streets with Pablo. He maintained that this happened in the Red Army in Trotsky's day. In Zagreb I had met Joe Pawsey, one of the old comrades in our movement, and wanted to express my doubts about the 'healthy workers' state' that was the correct line. He yelled at me that I was a renegade.

History does repeat itself. The pages of the *Daily Worker* were full of the glorious youth of the Soviet Union, the pages of *Socialist Outlook* about the heroic defenders of Socialist Yugoslavia.

On returning to Paris I bumped into Healy, whose only comment to me was 'you're expelled'. So ended my brief sojourn in Healy's 'club' ".¹⁰⁵

The circumstances that surrounded the fall of the Revolutionary Communist Party left their stamp upon the Trotskyist movement in Britain for the next generation. The Fourth International, unable to surmount its ideological crisis, had turned upon its own sections and was devouring them, while dragging in the wake of a Stalinist state. Bad politics promoted by dubious practice and a low theoretical level, had produced its own 'petty Bonaparte', a microcosmic Stalinism in a group of less than a hundred people. Blows at the revolutionaries went hand in hand with fawning on bureaucrats, in Britain and in Yugoslavia, and when Healy decided he was able to set up in business on his own, he then became a threat to those who had created him. As Charlie Van Gelderen remembers on one occasion in Paris:

"Pablo, Sherry Mangan and Sam Gordon tried to persuade me to join Healy's group. They were aware of Healy's weaknesses, and when I said that it would be difficult for me to work with Healy, they asked

'What about John Goffe as an alternative?' As far as they were concerned they would have preferred Goffe, but Goffe did not have the quality to establish himself. When we had a discussion on this, Sam (Gordon) still holds this against me.

There is no question in my mind that they created Healy. Their political line was correct - they chose the wrong man for the job, but they chose him for a deliberate purpose. It was the type of man that Cannon wanted. They knew he was a hard man, a man who would fight for what he wants, and that is what they wanted. Pierre Frank was making excuses later, but supporting them and their position. I think that on the whole their influence was a bad one - and they created this monster".¹⁰⁶

Notes

1. *Report of the 47th Annual Conference of the Labour Party*, Blackpool, 17th-21st May, 1948, pp. 115-117.
2. *Op. cit.*, pp. 137, 200-1
3. Ellis Hillman, Interview with Al Richardson, 19th June, 1978.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Socialist Outlook* vol. i, no. 1, December, 1948.
6. 'Once Again - The Real Situation in Britain', Internal Document of the Open Party Faction in the R.C.P. (mainly Alf Snobel), May 1949, p.18.
7. *Op. cit.*, n. 3 above.
8. T. Burns (G. Healy), 'An Election Report from London', in *The Militant* (S.W.P.), vol. xiv, no. 12, 20th March, 1950, p.2.
9. T. Burns, 'A Report from London on British Elections', in *The Militant*, vol. xv, no. 46, 12th November, 1951.
10. "HAVE YOU READ Michael Pablo's 'the Coming World Showdown?'. A Marxist analysis of today's complex world situation", in *Socialist Outlook*, no. 95, 11th September, 1952, p.4.
11. G. Healy, 'Plain Speaking on War and Peace', special issue of *Labour Review* vol. i, no. 3, September/November 1952, especially p.16: 'If the Second World War provoked worker and peasant revolts in numerous countries, a Third would call forth resistance on a broader scale throughout Europe and Asia. This most counter-revolutionary of world wars would engender the most revolutionary events in world history'.
12. 'On War', in *Socialist Outlook*, vol. iii, no. 9, September 1951, p.2.
13. Jack Stanley, 'What Are the Russian People Like? No Different From Us', in *Socialist Outlook*, no. 44, 13th June 1952, p.2.
14. Norman Goodchild, 'Youth Brigades Impressed By Yugoslavia', in *Socialist Outlook*, vol. ii, no. 10, October 1950, p.3; C.f. C. Slaughter (ed.), *The Fight Against Pabloism in the Fourth International*, London 1974, p.145.
15. *Op. cit.* n.3. above. *Socialist Outlook* even refused to print Trotskyist letters critical of Yugoslavia. C.f. Jock Haston, Letter to the Members of 'The Club', 10th June, 1950, p.3.
16. 'Stop the War! - Let the People Decide', in *Socialist Outlook*, vol. iii, no. 1, January 1951: 'How the Chinese View the Indo-Chinese War', in *Socialist Outlook*, no. 124, 9th April, 1954, p.2. (from New China News Agency).
17. *Socialist Outlook*, vol. i, no. 3, February 1949, p.2.

18. K. Kemshead, 'Who Controls Whom?', in *Socialist Outlook* vol. 1, no. 2, January 1949, p.4.
19. *Socialist Outlook*, vol. ii, no. 4, April 1950, p.2.
20. G. Healy, 'The Way to Socialism in Britain', in *Labour Review*, vol. i, no. 2, May/August, 1952, pp. 14, 16-18; T. Kemp, 'Healy and the Bevanites' in *News Line*, 3rd December, 1985. On the possibility that this article is, in fact, by George Novack, C.f. Charles Van Gelderen, 'Vyshinsky Rides Again', in *Healy's Big Lie*, New York, December, 1976, p.71.
21. Paul G. Stevens, in *The Militant* (U.S.A.), vol. xv, no. 49, 3rd December, 1951.
22. *The Militant*, vol. xv, no. 51, 17th December, 1951.
23. 'Report on Conference of British Labour Party', in *The Militant* (U.S.A.), vol. xii, no. 23, 7th June, 1948.
24. Charlie Van Gelderen, Interview with Al Richardson, 4th October, 1979.
25. 'Left Wing of Labour Party in Britain', in *The Militant*, vol. xiii, no. 38, 17th September 1949, p.2; Paul G. Stevens, 'Two Ways Out of Britain's Dollar Crisis', in *The Militant*, vol. xiii, no. 36, 5th September 1949, p.2.
26. Frank Allaun, 'The Founding of the Socialist Fellowship', in *Socialist Outlook*, vol. ii, no. 2, January 1950, p.4.
27. 'Statement on the Resignation of Ellis Smith and Fenner Brockway', in *Socialist Outlook*, vol. ii, no. 9, September 1950, p.4.
28. 'To Members of the Club', Internal Document of the Healy Group 1950, in Ed. R. Kuper, *The Fourth International, Stalinism and the Origin of the International Socialists*, London 1971, p.96.
29. Fred Emmett, "Socialist Fellowship Holds Second Conference: Adopts Full Socialist Policy" in *Socialist Outlook*, vol. ii, no. 11, November 1950, p.3.
30. Anonymous (Ted Grant), 'Statement to the B(ritish) S(ection of the) F(ourth) I(nternational)', internal document of the Healy Group, 1950, p.5.
31. 'Motions and Resolutions of the Fifth Plenum of the International Executive Committee', February 1948, p.2.
32. Above, pp. 178-81
33. Natalia Trotsky, Grandizo Munis and Benjamin Péret, 'The Fourth International in Danger', internal document of the R.C.P., 27th June 1947, p.7.
34. J. P. Cannon, 'Internationalism and the S.W.P.', speech to the New York Local, 18th May 1953, in *Speeches to the Party*, New York, p.73.
35. 'Resolution on the Preparation of the World Congress', in 'Record of Resolutions, Motions, etc., of the Third Plenum of the International Executive Committee', March 1947, internal document of the R.C.P., pp. 1-2. A motion from the French Section was rejected to allow representation and a consultative vote to all minorities no matter how small.
36. H(enry) J(udd), 'Politics of the International Working Class', in *New International*, vol. xii, no. 10, whole no. 112, December 1946, p.318. Frank regained his majority at the end of the year.
37. Op. cit., n. 33 above.
38. John Goffe, Interview with Al Richardson, 18th May, 1978.
39. 'The Trotskyist Movement and the Problem of the People's Democracies', in *Class Struggle/Lutte de Classe*, new series, no. 8, October 1967, pp. 16ff. 'Leblanc' was the pseudonym of D. Rousset, now a Gaullist Deputy.
40. International Secretariat. 'The Fourth International and Stalinism', internal document of the R.C.P., November, 1947, sections 24 & 29, pp. 15, 16, 19.
41. 'Amendments to the Theses on Russia and Eastern Europe', internal document of the R.C.P. (undated, but some time in Autumn 1947, on internal evidence) p.5.
42. M. Shachtman, 'The Congress of the Fourth International', in *New International*, vol. xiv, no. 8, October 1948, p. 242.
43. W. Forrest, 'The Trotskyists Hold A Secret Congress', in the *News Chronicle*, 10th May, 1948.
44. 'Resolution of the Information Bureau on the Situation in the Communist Party of Yugoslavia', in *World News and Views*, vol. xxviii, no. 28, 1948, p.285

45. J. Klugmann, 'The Rajk Trial and its Lessons', in *World News and Views*, vol. xxix, no. 40, 1st October, 1949, p. 476.
46. Harry Pollitt, Report to the 21st Congress of the C.P.G.B., in *Communist Policy to Meet the Crisis*, Conference Report, London 1949, p.19 and resolution on Yugoslavia.
47. Op. cit., n. 45 above, p. 476.
48. J. Klugmann, 'The Kostov Trial', in *World News and Views*, vol. xxix, no. 52, 31st December 1949, p.619.
49. J. Klugmann, *From Trotsky to Tito*, London, 1951.
50. J. J. Marie, *Le Trotskysme*, Paris, 1970, p.76.
51. Ted Grant and Jock Haston, *Behind the Stalin - Tito Clash*, R.C.P. pamphlet, 1948. p.18.
52. *New International*, vol. xiv, no. 7, September, 1948.
53. The text here is a combination of two separate translations, the one done internally for the R.C.P. and the other published in *Fourth International*, (S.W.P.), August 1948.
54. W. Hunter, 'The I.S. and Eastern Europe', internal document of the R.C.P., May 1949, p.11.
55. N. Trotsky, Letter to the I.E.C. and the P.C. of the S.W.P., 9th May, 1951, in Higgins (ed.), *Natalia Trotsky and the Fourth International*, I.S. pamphlet, 1972, p.10.
56. C.C., R.C.P., Letter to the I.S., 25th June, 1949, internal document of the R.C.P., p.4.
57. P.B., R.C.P., Letter to the I.S., 21st February 1949, in *Forum* discussion and information bulletin of the I.S.L. (Shachtman), 15th June 1949, p.41.
58. Anonymous (Ted Grant), 'The World Situation and the Crisis of Stalinism', internal document (n.d. but 1949), pp. 3-4
59. E. Grant, 'In Reply to David James', internal document of the R.C.P. pp. 7-9.
60. I.S. Resolution for the I.E.C., 'The Evolution of the Countries in the Buffer Zones', internal document of the R.C.P. 1949, pp. 11,9,5,8.
61. 'In Conclusion', in the *Internal Bulletin* of the International Secretariat of the Fourth International', July 1949, p.15.
62. Op. cit., n. 51 above, pp. 6-8.
63. Jock Haston, Interview with Al Richardson, 30th April, 1978. C.f. J. Haston, Letter to the Club, 10th June, 1950, p.2. The Red Army crossed the Yangtse on April 21st, 1949.
64. Anonymous (Ted Grant), 'The World Situation and the Crisis of Stalinism', internal document (undated), p.6.
65. E. Grant, 'In Reply to David James', internal document of the R.C.P., undated, p.17.
66. I.S., Letter to All Members of the R.C.P., 5th February 1949, internal document of the R.C.P., p.5.
67. Despite the denials of others, it is plain that this policy of worldwide entry was a conscious theory. C.f. M. Pablo, *Trotsky and His Epigones*, London 1977, pp. 18-21
68. F. Morrow, 'It is Time to Grow Up: The Infantile Sickness of the European Secretariat', 24th February 1946, in the *Internal Bulletin* of the S.W.P., vol. viii, no. 5, April, 1946, p.27.
69. J. Hinchcliffe, 'The N.C.L.C.', in *The Party Organiser*, January 1948, pp. 6-7.
70. Frank Ward, Interview with Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, 27th September, 1980.
71. T. Cliff, *The Nature of Stalinist Russia*, June 1948. As the book is essentially the same as its successor now in print, *State Capitalism in Russia*, 1974, readers can consult it for themselves, as there is no space to summarise the argument in full.
72. E. Grant, 'Against the Theory of State Capitalism: In Answer to Cliff'; 'The Marxist Theory of the State As Applied to the Stalinist States: Reply to Cliff', part ii. Space forbids an extensive treatment of these articles as well, as they are also available in pamphlet form and should be read together with Cliff's work.
73. David James, 'Some Remarks on the Question of Stalinism', internal document of the R.C.P. February 1949, pp. 10-, 4-5, 11.
74. E. Grant, 'In Reply to David James', internal document of the R.C.P. n.d. pp. 14-5.
75. Frank Ward, Internal document of the R.C.P. pp. 1-2.
76. 'Resolution Passed at Party Conference', in the *Internal Bulletin* of the I.S. of the Fourth International, July 1949, p.4.
77. J. Haston, H. Atkinson, R. Tearse and V. Charles (Van Gelderen), 'Statement on the

- Perspective of the R.C.P. Submitted to the Central Committee 8-9th December 1948', internal document of the R.C.P., pp. 3ff.
78. Political Bureau, 'Statement on Entry', March 1949, internal document of the R.C.P., pp. 2,5,6,13.
 79. I.S. Letter to All Members of the R.C.P., 5th February 1949, pp. 9-10.
 80. Tom Dunmore, 'The Crisis in the Revolutionary Movement', internal document of the R.C.P., February 1949, pp. 3,6, and 4.
 81. Johnny Mann, 'A Policy Review', internal document of the R.C.P., February 1949, p.6.
 82. Bill Cleminson, 'Criticisms of the Entry Statement of JH, HA, RT, VC', internal document of the R.C.P., pp. 2-3.
 83. 'The Case for the Open Party', in the *Internal Bulletin* of the R.C.P., 14th February, 1949.
 84. Open Party Faction, 'Once Again - The Real Situation in Britain', internal document of the R.C.P., May 1949 (mainly the work of Alf Snobel).
 85. Op. cit., n. 83 above, p.5.
 86. Ted Grant, J. Deane and J. Haston, 'Letter to Members', internal document of the R.C.P., pp 1,2.
 87. George Leslie, Interview with Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, 20th May, 1974.
 88. Sam Levy, Interview with Al Richardson, 7th April, 1974.
 89. S(am) B(ornstein) 'Report on the Meeting of the P.B.', in Minutes of the Open Party Faction Meeting, 13th May 1949.
 90. Open Party Faction, 'Once Again - The Real Situation in Britain', internal document of the R.C.P., May 1949, pp. 31-2.
 91. 'Declaration on the Dissolution of the Revolutionary Communist Party and the Entry of its Members into the Labour Party', special number of *Socialist Appeal*, July 1949.
 92. Sheila Leslie (Lahr), Interview with Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, 20th May, 1974.
 93. Jock Haston. Letter of 10th June 1950. He was later to play a reactionary rôle as Education Officer in the E.T.U. in the anti-Communist witch-hunt that followed the ballot scandal.
 94. 'Resolution Adopted Unanimously by the 8th Plenum of the I.E.C.'
 95. J. Haston, Letter of 10th June, 1950, p.6.
 96. Roy Tearse, Interview with Al Richardson, 6th July, 1978.
 97. Anonymous (Ted Grant), 'Statement to the B.S.F.I.', pp. 6-7 (n.d. but 1950 on internal evidence).
 98. 'To Members of the Club', in R. Kuper (ed.), *The Fourth International, Stalinism and the Origins of the International Socialists*, pp. 98-9.
 99. Percy Downey, Interview with Sam Bornstein, 26th November, 1977.
 100. Anonymous (Sam Levy), 'Tasks and Perspectives', internal document of The Club, p.7. (n.d. but 1950 on internal evidence).
 101. 'British Perspectives 1950', internal document of The Club, pp. 1-3.
 102. Op. cit., n.100 above.
 103. Sam Levy, Interview with Al Richardson, 7th April 1974. Anil Moonesingh, at that time a supporter of Cliff, later went back to Sri Lanka and was elected to parliament as an M.P. of the L.S.S.P. He became Minister of Transport when that party went into its first coalition government.
 104. 'Unity of the Party Within the International', Letter of the I.E.C. to All Members of the P.C.I., 7th June 1952 in the *International Information Bulletin*, November, 1952, p.27.
 105. Sam Bornstein, account written for this book, 16th August 1985.
 106. Charles Van Gelderen, Interview with Al Richardson, 4th October, 1979.

Chapter Eight

Trotskyism's Legacy

The contrast could not be more stark between the movement we have just finished describing and what passes as Trotskyism today. Whereas nine out of ten members of the Revolutionary Communist Party in 1946 were blue-collar working class, nine out of ten members of modern Trotskyist organisations are white collar employees, civil service clerks, teachers, and even film actors and television critics. But when a thought-world becomes removed from its proper setting, no matter how much it may preserve its outer forms, beneath an outer shell or skin of orthodoxy a new content asserts itself. To explain why Trotskyism has been able to make such a transformation from quantity into quality (or rather the reverse process) it is necessary to go into the problem of the relationship of revolutionary ideas to revolutionary history.

All revolutions in society are preceded by revolutions in ideas. Theory must itself be revolutionised before the ideas can develop that can lead to revolution. This is because the ideas are reflections of real changes that are taking place in society, the new world growing up in the womb of the old. The English revolution of 1642 was preceded by the rise of Puritanism, as well as the new experimental philosophy of Francis Bacon and his contemporaries. The French Revolution of 1789 followed the intellectual ferment of the encyclopaedists and the Enlightenment. The *Communist Manifesto* coincided with the great year of revolutions in Europe, and the Paris Commune led to a deeper understanding of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. The Russian Revolution was heralded by the theory of Permanent Revolution and Lenin's deeper understanding of the dialectic in his *Philosophical Notebooks*, and in turn produced further advances in revolutionary theory.

But what happens in periods of stagnation, when no revolutions take place, for example in Western Europe during the last thirty years of boom and civil calm?

There can be little doubt that ideas, which do not remain suspended in

mid-air, also undergo development, but *backwards* - in the form of regression. Here a clue is supplied by Lenin, when he shows how the thinkers of the Second International had turned Marx into a vulgar bourgeois Liberal in the years of expanding capitalism up to the First World War.

Brutal experience has left few thinking people in the labour movement with illusions as to the past record of Stalinism or Social Democracy, which in Britain, in any case, managed to get along without any theory in the first place. Trotsky's books and books about his movement sell in surprising quantities, yet the social uses to which they are put in no way match the original intention. Apart from supplying a few lecturers with a marginal source of income, they are more likely to provide the rationale for local government hand-outs to fringe political groupings, than for working class practice. Another, and more obvious function, is to serve as the ideology and justification of a sectarian group. In this context the cultivation of a Trotskyist 'orthodoxy' is the most amusing phenomenon, for orthodoxy is a religious attitude, not a materialist or a revolutionary one. Revolutionary ideas must of necessity be heresies, unaccepted and unacceptable to a hostile world they seek to change. Lenin himself was not one of the Old Bolsheviks who were old fools.

To make Marxism serve these divergent ends it becomes necessary to do considerable damage to its body of ideas, especially to the connecting links maintaining the unity of the structure. Marxism is a theory of totality, and its programmes must reflect this. If its ideas are quarried for texts, to serve as the practice of other social layers, they become scriptural quotations, and it becomes changed into its opposite - from a scientific theory into a religion. An outlook that can express itself in babies' nappies tied to wire fences has clearly not outgrown the world of symbolism, no matter how sophisticated it may feel it is. Thus the many Trotskyist groups of today construct their programmes as a man strings beads - adding unit to unit until some sort of accumulation has taken place - a good idea from here, a neat little slogan there, bits of borrowed practice from anywhere. The confrontation of the basic classes does not seem to be an item taken into consideration, and without this realisation it is impossible to talk about strategic tasks at all. Politics became a question of middle class morality, not of working class self-interest. With the morality come the fads, the fashions, the fetishes and the symbols.

Revolutionary ideas only survive a long period of low working class activity in frozen form, because unconnected to practice of a revolutionary type they are not rooted in material conditions, and cannot assume flesh and blood. They express the past of the movement and not its present. This is why Trotsky turned back, again and again, to the experience of the Russian revolution for solutions to the problems of the defeats of the working class during the period between the wars. Since 'Trotskyism' is merely the form taken by Marxism during the epoch of the defeat of the world proletariat, its

enforced existence in a world of small group politics has made it peculiarly vulnerable to transformation into its opposite.

If we disregard the form in which Trotskyism expresses itself in this country at present and look at the essence, we shall see that each of the major groupings reproduces one of the stages in the development of socialist ideas that has long been discarded.

The Socialist Workers Party, which claims to be 'Trotskyist-derived' rather than 'Trotskyist' as such, is the linear descendant of those who defended the idea that the Stalinist states are 'state capitalist' inside the R.C.P. in its closing years, and were expelled from 'The Club' for continuing to propound them. Its view of the development of the world is an extreme form of 'objectivism', that the world revolution develops along clearly demarcated lines, in unavoidable stages, irrespective of the intentions and actions of men. A premature revolution in backward Russia has only led in the end to capitalism - if to capitalism of a different type. The working class in the 'Third World' has no historic rôle, for capitalism is the inevitable result there as well. The theory of the Permanent Revolution ceases to be viable or valid, and with the concept of the Permanent Arms Economy, capitalism too, is held to be surmounting some of its problems with slumps and recessions - until recently.

But whilst its theory approximates to old-fashioned Second International Marxism (émigré Mensheviks also analysed Russia as State Capitalist), its practice has more in common with syndicalism. The 'rank and file' is institutionalised, made into a cult, and exhorted to constant self-activity. Trade union bureaucrats and Labour politicians come in for moral denunciation, but no strategy is elaborated to remove them. The demands for a workers' government addressed to the Labour politicians take second place to sterile sermons on the corrupting results of electoralism, the propensity of politicians to betrayal, or the baleful influences of the Labour Party. Perspectives for party building become simply a question of 'come and join us'.

If the real content of the S.W.P.'s ideas is syndicalism, the key to the ideas supported by *Militant* is Second International Social Democracy. *Militant* is not, of course, a group as such, but a newspaper defending ideas developed by the chief theorist of the old R.C.P. Here again the world revolution is an objective process in which the result in the 'Third World' is inevitable Stalinist degeneration. Guerilla leaders, army generals and bureaucrats all set up workers' states, deformed at birth, of course, in bewildering proliferation with no rôle for the revolutionary working class to play at all. In Britain the *Transitional Programme* (or rather *Militant's* slogan equivalents) becomes not a bridge to the masses, but a barrier against their progress. Workers are told that the resolution of the slightest demand is not possible without the nationalisation of the monopolies carried out by a Labour Government armed with a Socialist programme. To the working class, vitally interested in what reforms there are still to be had, this is a

council of despair. What it says in effect is that nothing is possible short of socialism. The programme is thus not a transitional one at all, but reproduces in its own quaint way the classic two-stage Erfurt Programme of German Social Democracy, with its rigid distinction between maximum and minimum demands. Since the speeches and slogans are unvarying, whatever the context, it reproduces the authentic evangelistic flavour of the old Socialist pioneers in the nineteenth century, the eerie phenomenon of an S.P.G.B. somehow existing within the Labour Party. To complete the resemblance to nineteenth century Social Democracy it even advocates the introduction of socialism by means of an Enabling Act of a Labour government peacefully in Parliament, neglecting the duty of Marxists to warn that such a social overturn is impossible without the armed struggle for power.

If the S.W.P. practice is syndicalism, and *Militant* approximates to Social Democracy, there can be little doubt that the Workers' Revolutionary Party apes the behaviour of Third Period Stalinism. For more than thirty years Healy and his followers have promised the cataclysmic slump, with the occasional Third World War or Fascism thrown in for good measure, generally within so short a time as six months. The membership is kept at a pitch of hyperactivity, knowing that the crisis is round the corner, until after a year or so the saner or the less committed drop out. As the link of the organisation with the real class struggle is tenuous, the members' attention is focussed on a series of twice-yearly stunts, generally rallies or route marches, and all activity is organised around the build-up to them. Virulent sectarianism, the politics of denunciation carried to excess, a conspiratorial atmosphere, obsessed with plots and police agents, all proclaim a repeat performance of early 30's Stalinism. We have an entry practice of the 'smash and grab' type, operated by identical personnel not only on the Labour Party but on the other Trotskyist groups as well, and classic Stalinist front formations such as the 'All Trades Unions Alliance' or the 'Community Councils'. Periodically the organisation reverts to its origins (tail-ending Tito's Yugoslavia) when it applauds Mao's 'Cultural Revolution', or pays court to Islamic dictators over the bones of revolutionaries in their countries. An enormous personality cult - irony of ironies - is organised around Trotsky, leading to obscene ceremonies around his death mask. And where there are saints, there are also demons. In this scenario the part of Trotsky is taken by Michel Pablo, and incantations against 'Pabloite Revisionism' take the place of the Moscow Trials. When we consider the part played by Pablo in creating this tendency in the first place, it adds its own touch of insincerity, and of ingratitude. To complete the resemblance to Stalinism we have a microcosmic repetition of the Twentieth Party Congress of the Soviet Union - an agonised reappraisal of the past and the expulsion of the dictator, from his party if not from Lenin's mausoleum.

The smaller groups are less stable and imitate the larger, so there is little point in extending the analysis to them once a case is made out that under

the outer husk of 'Trotskyism' something very different, and familiar, remains. And History has a harsh way of disposing of movements that are superfluous to her needs. Within the last year, three of the Trotskyist groups have followed the Communist Party into deep splits, as the general crisis of the working class institutions bears down upon its weaker components.

Is this, then, the sole result of the long years of hard work and endeavour we have attempted to trace in these two books?

We think not. To begin with we pointed out that 'Trotskyism' is simply the form taken by Marxism in the conditions of the defeat of the workers' movement in the years between the wars. At its heart lies the critique of Stalinism - the only one, we would submit, that comes close to analysing this phenomenon. Only if we accept and assimilate the body of Marxist theory as it stands can we hope to be able to build upon it, develop it and adapt it to our needs - to go forward to the post-Trotskyist phase of Marxism, so to speak. Despite those who would like to bypass this essential task via the books of Gramsci or the speeches of Fidel Castro, a whole body of theory and experience stands in their way. Many of the lessons may be negative ones, but they are lessons nonetheless.

The theoretical achievements of British Trotskyism, for example, are not inconsiderable, even though they lie buried among long-forgotten journals or internal bulletins and hence are quite unknown to the Trotskyist epigones of today. The results gained from the discussion of the theory of revolutionary entry during the thirties remain unappreciated. The brief experience of workers' control in the R.O.F. at Nottingham supplies the only example of this during the Second World War. The policy worked out to counter unemployment in 1945 is full of lessons for the movement now. The understanding gained of the stabilisation of Europe in 1945 and of the spread of Stalinism in Eastern Europe and the 'Third World' has still not been grasped by those calling themselves Trotskyists. Ideas of the rôle of the state in the capitalist economy have come into their own, especially in the developing countries. The books written during this period by F.A. Ridley, Reg Groves and C.L.R. James, and afterwards by Hugo Dewar, remain possessions for all time.

In like manner the debt owed by the broader labour movement to the British Trotskyists has not been acknowledged. The banner of Socialist Internationalism during the Second World War was carried by no-one else. The consistent defence of workers' democracy in trade unions and meeting halls during the same period was theirs. They alone counterposed the true vision of the workers' state to the 'Socialism' of the Leader Cult, the police state and the extermination camp, and when the British Government of 1944 moved to curtail the ancient rights of the trade unions it was the Trotskyists who raised the alarm.

Numerically it cannot be denied that the Trotskyist movement now is in an incomparably stronger position than it ever was during the period we have had under review. Together, the numbers of young people inspired by

Trotskyism without doubt outnumber those in the Stalinist groupings, the British Communist Party included. The activist who gives out a leaflet or sells a paper or pamphlet at the door of a hall is more likely to be a Trotskyist than any other, as is the one who raises Socialist ideas in the the union branch or the ward meeting. It is thus of vital importance, in the coming period, that they should discard the weapons they have picked up from Stalinism and sharpen and refurbish those that spring from their own heritage. There can be little doubt that the main threat to the labour movement at present comes from those who would create a new Popular Front with the Liberals or Social Democrats, if Labour should fail to form a government. The invariable results of such alliances are such as we see in France today - the growth of dangerous right wing trends in the disillusion that follows. As always, the conscious advocates of such a Popular Front remain the Stalinists. But today's Trotskyists are trailing along dangerously in their wake. By their sowing of illusions in pacifism, their refusal to pose class questions, and the pernicious attempt to split the movement along the lines of sex or colour, they have also made their contribution. All these policies steer away from the idea of workers' unity towards a unity constructed on some other basis.

Capitalism can only continue to exist if it constantly revolutionises the basis of its own existence. Technological innovation speeds up not only the process of production and distribution, but the pace of society itself. In largely peasant societies, such as Russia in 1917, and Spain in 1936 it was possible for conditions of crisis - even dual power - to last for a considerable time. There can be little doubt, however, that such periods of revolutionary opportunity will be considerably shortened in the age of the microchip and the telecommunications satellite. The General Strike of May 1968 in France came to a head in a fortnight. If such comes upon us, as things are at present, we feel that the Trotskyist movement may not be in a position to take advantage of the opportunities presented to it.

It is with this in mind that we have attempted to present the lessons of the history of Trotskyism in Britain in its heyday. Each point of view has been brought before the reader in its own words, reserving the judgement to him alone, and it is for him to judge how far we have succeeded. If we have been able to point out that many of the questions in the movement at present were not only posed in the past, but even in part solved, we shall count ourselves content.

Appendix One

The thanks we owe to the following who granted us interviews must be obvious to all who have read this book:

ALEX ACHESON. Interviewed by Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, 12th June, 1986.

EVE BROWN (FINCH). Interviewed by Sam Bornstein, 21st January 1984.

FRED BUNBY. Interviewed by Sam Bornstein, 21st January 1984.

JOHN BYRNE. Interviewed by Al Richardson, September 1976.

DAVID CHALKLEY. Interviewed by Al Richardson, 14th November 1978.

GERTRUDE DEANE. Interviewed by Sam Bornstein, 8th July 1980.

HUGO DEWAR. Interviewed by Al Richardson, 7th April 1978.

STEVE DOWDALL and DAISY GROVES. Interviewed by Al Richardson.

PERCY DOWNEY. Interviewed by Sam Bornstein, 26th November 1977.

SID FROST (MAX BOSCH). Interviewed by Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, 14th June 1983.

JOHN GOFFE. Interviewed by Al Richardson, 18th May 1978.

MILDRED GORDON (FALLERMAN). Interviewed by Al Richardson, 13th February 1981.

SAM GORDON. Interviewed by Sam Bornstein, 17th October 1977.

DAVE GRANICK. Interviewed by Sam Bornstein, August 1976.

TED GRANT. Interviewed by Sam Bornstein, 22nd August 1982.

REG GROVES. Interviewed by Al Richardson, 2nd April 1978.

GEORGE HANSEN. Interviewed by Sam Bornstein, 3rd April 1978.

JOCK HASTON and MILLIE HASTON (LEE). Interviewed by Al Richardson, 30th April 1978.

ELLIS HILLMAN. Interviewed by Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, 19th June 1978.

JIM HINCHCLIFFE. Interviewed by Sam Bornstein, 31st December 1977.
BILL HUNTER. Interviewed by Al Richardson, 5th and 14th June, 1986.
C.L.R. JAMES. Interviewed by Al Richardson, 8th June, 1986.
MARGARET JOHNS. Interviewed by Al Richardson, 4th February 1978.
ANN KEEN. Interviewed by Sam Bornstein, 10th February 1974.
GEORGE LESLIE. Interviewed by Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, 20th May 1974.
SHEILA LESLIE (LAHR). Interviewed by Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, 20th May 1974.
SAM LEVY. Interviewed by Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, 20th May 1973.
PAT McVEIGH. Interviewed by Sam Bornstein, September 1973.
FRANK MAITLAND. Interviewed by Sam Bornstein, August 1976.
FREDERICK MARZILLIER. Interviewed by Al Richardson, 2nd December 1978.
MATTY MERRIGAN. Interviewed by Sam Bornstein, 15th April 1974.
ALEX MURIE. Interviewed by Sam Bornstein, 17th August 1984.
MAX NICHOLLS. Interviewed by Sam Bornstein, 15th December 1979.
DAISY RAWLINGS. Interviewed by Sam Bornstein, 7th September 1976.
JACK RAWLINGS. Interviewed by Sam Bornstein, September 1973.
FRANK RIDLEY. Interviewed by Al Richardson, 10th September 1977.
JOHN ROBINSON. Interviewed by Al Richardson, 30th June 1978.
E. ROGERS. Interviewed by Al Richardson, 1st April, 1986.
AJIT ROY. Tape done for Sam Bornstein, September 1979.
ROSE SELNER (CARSON). Interviewed by Sam Bornstein, 23rd June 1984.
T. DAN SMITH. Interviewed by Sam Bornstein, 5th June 1985.
ROY TEARSE. Interviewed by Al Richardson, 6th July 1978.
CHARLIE VAN GELDEREN. Interviewed by Al Richardson, 4th October 1979.
FRANK WARD. Interviewed by Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, 27th September 1980.
HARRY WICKS. Interviewed by Al Richardson, 11th March and 1st April 1978.
BOB WILSKER. Interviewed by Al Richardson, 10th November 1984.
RYAN WORRALL. Interviewed by Al Richardson, 26th November 1978.

We have also profited greatly from the following interviews, kindly loaned to us:

JOHN ARCHER. Interviewed by Martin Upham (no date).
NILS DAHL. Interviewed by Mildred Gordon, 27th December 1983.

Appendix Two

The Wartime Agitation of A Trotskyist Soldier

Although the information given to us by Alex Acheson came too late to be incorporated into the body of the text of this book, we felt that it was too valuable to leave out, both on account of its intrinsic interest and to dispell the illusion that it was only the W.I.L. comrades in the forces who tried to make contact with comrades abroad (Acheson was a close friend of Kemshead, a supporter of the 'Trotskyist Opposition' of the R.S.L.).

“Once we got to the mainland, Egypt, through my network of comrades - like Bill Quinn of Leicester, who was in touch with Charlie Van Gelderen in Italy - I got the address of an Egyptian contact in the Trotskyist movement. And we effected contact and I met them regularly - because by now, having been kicked out of my second regiment, I was now based at Heliopolis. And in that period I certainly met some of the Palestinian comrades who came down to meet them, although at that stage the Palestinians and the Egyptians didn't hit it off very well. But there was certainly an election in Egypt round this time, and the Trotskyist group supported the first Socialist candidate in an Egyptian election. And I participated in this, going round the houses and tenements where the workers were. And the result of the election was that the Socialist candidate got less votes than the sponsors of his candidature, showing of course, the age-old mockery of democracy in most of these countries.....”

“The Egyptians had to work under extremely difficult circumstances. There was apparently an ‘open society’, but where revolutionary politics of any kind were illegal, and the penalty was imprisonment (which was often used to break people, physically and psychologically) they worked through a publishing house called *The Masses*, and that was the cover for their organisation. Now Georges Heneim was an intellectual, in an artistic, cultural circle of people. One of them, I was told, when I was invited to his house to which I went along, had a father who was a millionaire - and in Egypt it wasn't unusual for people to be millionaires, because of the great exploitation. The difference between the rich and the poor was something

glaring, more glaring than it was in England. Loutfallah Souleiman was the best informed, I think, from the Trotskyist point of view, but he took a line towards the end of the War of supporting the I.K.D. position. They were, though, publishing various books, mainly in opposition to the Stalinists. They realised that their main opponents were the Stalinists, who were quite strong in the Middle East..... They published both in Arabic and in English. They published an extract from Lindsay Drummond's book, a pamphlet on Liebknecht and Luxemburg. They also published a book exposing the rôle of people like Louis Aragon, the French writer and artist. I can't remember all the other ones, but they published what they could....."

"..... a warning..... was given to Georges Heneim's girlfriend, Iqbal Alaily, who had published a book on 'The German Genius' to counteract the atrocity propaganda of the Allies. She was told that unless she curtailed her activities and stopped associating with the group, she would finish up in the Tura quarries. For a delicate girl like that it would have been a death sentence....."

"I think I mentioned to you that the Egyptian comrades were reasonably well off. Georges Heneim was a middle class fellow, who (I think) worked in the Cairo Waterworks. They treated me to a dinner in a very posh wall garden restaurant, where we had just about finished our meal when an officer accosted me, demanding to know who I was, and then pointed out that I was associating with known subversives who were enemy agents. This meant that we made a quick exit, and it was quite clear that the Military and the Egyptian political police had us pretty well taped....."

"Towards the end of my stay in Egypt, after I had been in the Lebanon and Syria, the Greek situation was developing, where although there had been an agreement between Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin where Greece was to be an area of influence for Britain, the Communist Party of Greece was fighting against the Monarchists and the Right Wing and were winning. So these soldiers in the base depots, who were waiting to go home or were in the process of transferring from one regiment to another, were mobilised and trained in big battalions in preparation. We were told to go over to Greece to maintain 'law and order'. By then I had re-established contact with Joe Pawsey, who had been in the Marxist Group before the War, and we, in contact with the Egyptian comrades, drafted a leaflet, which the Egyptian comrades duplicated for us, which Joe and I were to distribute, calling upon the 'squaddies' in the army not to fight against their working class brothers in Greece, but to refuse - and we nearly got caught. Joe was only able to escape the Military Police by diving into a cinema and subsiding into a seat amongst all the others. I was able to distribute in the canteens and Naafis, and in tents where we were in the desert sand, and as it was quite dark I got rid of a lot of the leaflets, and I actually managed to bring two back with me secreted in my kit bag".

Index

- Acheson, Alex, 26, 49 n.79, 50 n.97-8, 246
 Acland, Sir Richard, 126
 Allighan, Gary, 49 n.79
 Anti-Labour Laws Victims' Defence Committee, 129, 134, 136
 Archer, John, 2, 99, 107, 109, 178, 180, 207 n.136
 Armstrong, Bob, 36, 49 n.79, 178, 181, 183
 Aspinall, 20
 Atkinson, Bert 36, 39, 45, 113 n.61, 175, 183, 197
 Atkinson, Harold, 6, 225, 230
 Auld, Alec 69, 82
- Bailey, Bill, 36, 37, 39, 49 n.80
 Ballard, Arthur, 38
 Banda, Mike, 212
 Banerjee, Kamalesh, 229
 Bannerji, A. C., 135, 156 n.72
 Barrow Strike (August 1943), 73-7
 Bartholemew, Claude, 59, 61, 63, 86
 Beet 11, 12, 19 n.41
 Bell, Herbie, 82, 141, 157 n.95
 Betteshanger Strike (January 1941), 17
 Bevan, Aneurin, 122-3, 127, 129, 133, 151, 206 n.10
 Bevin, Ernest, 74, 118, 121, 125-6
 Bidwell, Sid, 58-9, 91 n.38, 163-4
 Binah, Dror, 82
 Birchall, Tommy, 5
 Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India, 85, 86
 Bone, Sid, 40
 Bordiga, Amadeo, 30-1, 86, 87
 Bornstein, Sam, 6, 73, 226, 232
 Boyle, 39
 Braddock, Bessie, 6, 214
 Braddock, Jack, 6
 Braddock, Tom, 210, 213, 214
 Bradley, Gerry, 34
 Bramley, Ted, 16
 Brannan, 29
- Brewer, Eric, 5
 Brock, 200
 Brockway, Fenner, 26, 34, 82, 145, 210, 213, 214
 Brown, George 93 n.89
 Building Workers' Campaign Committee, 151, 159 n.134
 Bunby, Fred, 6, 85-6
 Burns, Emile, 36
 Byrne, Jimmy, 150
- The Call*, 26
 Campbell, J. R., 16, 46 n.79, 57, 80, 127, 128
 Cannon, James P., 13, 20, 22-3, 25, 40, 102, 173, 197, 199, 207 n.132, 214-5, 234
 Carford, Arthur, 9, 11, 12, 19 n.41, 39
 Carlson, Geoff, 226
 Carmichael, Cllr, 134
 Carson, Rose (Rose Selner), 50 n.112, 95 n.164, 183
 Chalkley, David, 26
 Chamberlain, Ronald, 214
 Cleminson, Bill, 226, 231
 Cliff, Tony, see Ygael Gluckstein
The Club, 230, 231-2
 Clyde Workers' Committee, 70, 78-9
 Cochran, Bert, 197
 Communist Party of Greece, 247
 Condon, Bert, 135, 138-9, 165-6, 186, 205 n.84
 Connolly O'Brien, Nora, 10
 Cooper, Arthur, 26, 40, 103, 105, 109, 110
 Cortonwood Strike (May 1942), 63-5
 Cove, W. G., 129
 Cox, Idris, 37, 138
 Curtin, William, 38
 Curtis, Charles, 30
- Da Silva, Colvin, 86
 Davies, S. O., 126, 129, 214
 Davis, Leigh, 26, 34, 44, 107, 110

- Davy, Bill, 115, 116, 118, 121, 131, 133, 153
n.13, 154 n.26, 155 n.54
De Havilland's, Edgware, 59, 70, 127-8
De Leon, Daniel, 20
Deane, Arthur, 226
Deane, Jimmy, 5, 73, 169, 225, 227, 228, 231, 232
Deutscher, Isaac (*Josef Bren*), 39, 50 n.97
Dewar, Hugo, 26, 34, 70, 242
Di Bartolomeo, Nicola, 30, 31, 32, 87
Dicks, Jimmy, 58, 102
Dillon, Will, 41
Dollan, Sir Patrick, 29
Donnachie, 117, 131, 135
Downey, Percy, 6, 62, 167, 231
Dunayevskaya, Raya, 4 n.20
Duncan, Sir Andrew, 65
Duncan, Bill, 22, 35, 39, 45, 50 n.98
Dunne, Tommy, 38, 39
Dunsmore, Tom, 226

Eastern Europe, 183-5, 197-8, 217-221
Elliot, Bill, 59
Elsbury, Ben, 5, 35, 36, 72, 102
Emmett, Fred, 40, 66, 200, 214
Egypt, 247

Fairhead, John, 212
Farrager, Arthur, 36, 39, 73
Fight, 20, 22
Finch, Harry, 138, 168, 169
Fourth International: Founding Conference (1938) 23-5
International Pre-Conference (1946) 178-81, 182
3rd Plenum of IEC (1947) 215-6
2nd World Congress (1948) 217-8
Frank, Pierre, 85, 143, 145, 158 n.106, 178, 180, 181, 187, 215, 234, 235 n.36
Free Expression, 34
Friends of the Irish Republic, 38
Frieslich, Dick, 2

Gallacher, William, 64, 126
Garbutt, Douglas, 85
George, J. S., 136
Glass, Frank (Li Fu-Jen) 18 n.12
Gluckstein, Ygaël (Tony Cliff), 183, 190, 223, 231, 232
Goffe, John, 40, 107, 110, 142-3, 178, 180, 197, 216, 234
Goldberg, Sam, 229
Goldman, Albert, 172, 174, 175
Gollan, John, 7, 79
Goonewardene, Leslie, 86
Gordon, Sam, 100-1, 145, 158 n.107, 177, 206 n.124, 233, 234
Gould, Nathan, 22, 25, 48 n.62
Grainger, 5
Grant, Ted, 3, 14, 32, 56, 63-4, 77, 89, 101, 107, 109, 110, 127, 129, 176-8, 183, 190, 198, 200, 214, 220, 222-5, 227-8, 230-2
Groves, Reg, 26, 34, 46 n.9, 47 n.28, 72, 129, 242

Hall, Joe, 63-4, 118
Hamilton, Betty, 3, 47 n.24, 85
Hannington, Wal, 78
Hanson, George, 227, 230
Harber, Denzil Dean, 2-4, 22-4, 33, 35, 40-3, 103-4, 106, 109, 191, 207 n.136
Haston, Jock, 2-3, 9-10, 11, 14-5, 17, 32, 39, 53, 58, 68, 70, 72, 101, 108, 110, 118 120-1, 127, 130-1, 133-4, 136-140, 153 n.13, 157 n.93, 178, 180, 182, 183-8, 190, 196, 199, 200, 204 n.64, 205 n.80, 217, 222-231, 237 n.93
Healy, Betty, see Betty Russell
Healy, Gerry, 3, 5, 7, 9-10, 14, 53, 68, 101-3, 105-6, 110, 154 n.19, 158 n.107, 162, 178, 187-9, 197-9, 210-4, 228, 231, 233-4
Healy Minority (RCP), 102-3, 105-6, 145, 160, 168, 194, 195, 196-7, 198, 215, 226, 228, 230
Hillman, Ellis, 210, 212
Hinchcliffe, Jim, 39, 75
Hood, Roddy, 29, 145, 148, 149
Houghton, Albert, 5
Hunter, Bill, 34, 82, 186, 189, 204 n.64, 219

Independent Labour Party, 5, 6, 68, 81-2, 128-9, 145
International Secretariat (of the Fourth International), 1, 3-4, 97-8, 99, 102, 103, 104, 184, 193, 195, 196, 198, 209, 214, 215-7, 221-2, 228
Internationale Kommunisten Deutschlands (International Communists of Germany), 95 n.161, 178
Ireland, 10, 37-9, 86
Irish Republican Army, 10, 37, 39

Jackson, 11, 12, 19 n.41
Jackson, E. Starkey, 2, 3, 4, 22, 26, 33, 34, 35, 42, 51 n.113
Jackson, Fred, see Forward, 6, 7
James, C. L. R., 22, 23, 24, 46 n.20, 48 n.62, 136, 242
James, David, 223-4
James, Don, 5

- Jay, Douglas, 34
 Jenkins, Clive, 137
 Johns, Margaret, 4, 26-7, 35, 42, 47 n.40, 51 n.113
 Johnston, 115
 Johnstone, 117
- Karsner, Rose, 30
 Keen, Ann, 115, 116, 118-20, 122, 130, 133, 153 n.13,
 Kemshead, 207 n.132, 212, 246
 Kirkwood, David, 124
 Klement, Rudolph, 2, 23
 Klenerman, Fanny, 3
 Klugman, James, 218
 Kossoff, Sammy, 5
- Labour League of Youth, 5
 Lane, Hilda, 22, 35, 39, 41, 50 n.98, 209, 212, 214
 Lanka Sama Samaja Party, 85-6
 Lawrence, John, 41, 42, 100, 101, 103, 105, 106, 109, 110, 111 n.25, 136, 137, 210, 212, 214
 Lawther, Will, 63, 64, 138
 Leadbetter, Arthur, 88
 Lee, Heaton, 2, 3, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 122, 130, 132, 133, 134, 137, 150, 230
 Lee, Millie, 2, 3, 14, 70, 154 n.19, 199
 Lee, Ralph, 2-4, 5, 11, 14, 19 n.52
Left Fraction, 28 41, 42, 43, 104, 105, 106, 109, 110, 145-9, 158 n.110
 Leslie, George, 226, 228
 Leslie, Sheila, 226, 230
 Lesoil, Leon, 24
 Levy, Sam 14, 226, 228, 231, 232
 Loughton, Alf, 34, 70, 150-1, 159 n.33
 Lunt, Marion, 200, 226
- Maclean, Margaret, 149
 Maclean, Neil, 126
 Mahon, John, 68, 91 n.65
 Maitland, Frank 20, 21, 33
 Mandel, Ernest, 184, 189-90, 217, 232, 233
 Managama, 30, 31
 Mangan, Sherry, 97, 99, 104, 105, 106, 110, 113 n.61, 177, 178, 180, 207 n.135, 233
 Mann, Johnny, 226
 Mannin Ethel, 10
 Martinson, Charles 'Mazo', 1451, 152, 159 n.137
 Matlow, Bert, 46
 Matlow, May, 46
 Matthews, Harry, 5
 Maunder, Jack, 138, 157 n.81
- Maxton, Jimmy, 128, 129, 133, 134, 155 n.49
 McCullough, Elsie, 36
 McGovern, John, 124, 129, 133, 145
 McGregor, Don, 34
 McShane, Harry, 79
 McVeigh, Pat, 20, 58, 73, 186
 Mercer, Tom, 29, 41, 99, 107, 145, 148, 149, 158 n.122
 Merrigan, Mattie, 183
Militant (UK), 3, 22, 42, 105, 111 n.14, 192, 193
Militant Group, 3, 4, 5, 22, 108, 109
 Militant Labour League, 25, 27, 35, 110-11 n.1
Militant Scottish Miner, 29, 146
 Militant Workers' Federation, 34, 70-1, 73, 77, 78, 109, 116, 131, 187
 Milligan, Jock, 38, 39, 150-1
 Miners Militant, 105
Mission to Moscow (Joseph E. Davies), 71-3, 88
 Molefe, J. R., 3
 Molinier, Raymond, 25, 30, 32, 85
 Moonesingh, Anil, 232, 237 n.103
 Morrison, Herbert, 60, 64, 119, 175
 Morrow, Felix, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 187, 202 n.28, 223
 Murphy, James, 38, 39, 49 n.95
 Munis Grandizo, 111 n.20
- National Council for Civil Liberties, 38, 127, 155 n.40
 Naville, Pierre, 24
 Neath by-election (May 1945) 136-140
 Newcastle Trial, xii, 121, 35
 Nightingale, 59, 61, 63
 1945 General Election, 141-4
 Nosedá, George, 9-10
 Novack, George, 235 n.20
- Open Party Faction (RCP), 226, 227, 228
 Orwell, Charlie, 110, 183
 Owen, Jack, 78
- Pablo, Michel (Michael Raptis), 24, 181, 195, 211, 212, 223, 228, 233, 234 n.10
 Paton, Andrew (Andy Scott), 13, 54
 Pawsey, Joe, 214, 233
Peace and Unity Agreement 21, 33, 102
 Pemberton, John, 59, 61-2, 63
 Pentland, Norman, 226
 People's Convention, 16
 Pratt, Hilda 35, 102, 107
 Pritt, D. N., 88, 124-5, 127
 Privas, Jacques, 228
 Proletarian Military Policy, 13-15, 40-41, 107

- Raptis, Michael, see Michel Pablo
 Ratner, Harry, 209
 Rawlings, Daisy, 67
 Rawlings, Jack, 69, 115
 Rea, Ted, 73, 74
 Reilly, Tommy, 6, 9-10, 201
 Revolutionary Communist Party, Ch.5,
 Ch.6, Ch.7
 Founding Conference 106-110, 1945
 General Election 141-4, 2nd
 Congress (Aug. 1945), 167, 187,
 Conference (Sept. 1946) 185, 199,
 Conference (June 1947) 195, Special
 Conference (Oct. 1947) 195, Special
 Conference (June 1949) 229
The Revolutionary Socialist, 20
 Revolutionary Socialist League, 4, Ch.2, 97,
 Ch.4
 Revolutionary Socialist Party, 20, 22, 23
 Revolutionary Workers' League, 36, 37, 39
 Reynolds, Reg, 10
 Riach, Alec, 63, 135, 230
 Ridley, Frank, 81, 242
 Ridley, Jasper, 212
 Robinson, John L. 28, 41, 42, 107, 108, 110,
 148, 149
 Ross, J. 226
 Rous, Jean, 25
 Rousset, David, 24, 217, 235 n.39
 Rowe, Frank, 135
 Roy, Ajit, 8
 Royal Ordnance Factories, xii, 59-63
 Rudling, Alex, 192-3
 Russell, Betty, 81, 82, 102
 Russell, Gibbie, 29, 41, 109, 146
 Russia, 182-4, 217-8
 Ryan, Rachel, 55

 Sams, Gillie, 128
 Sara, Henry, 26, 34
 Sastry, V., 129
 Scott, Andy, see Andrew Paton
The Searchlight, 5
 Selby, Harry, 28, 41, 148, 149
 Selner, Rosa, see Rose Carson
 Shachtman, Max, 20, 23, 24, 30, 48 n.62, 175,
 183, 184, 215, 218
 Shaw, Bob, 102, 189
 Silverman, Ernest, 127, 129, 133, 135
 Silverman, Sidney, 7, 49 n.79, 129
 Sisley, Charlie, 226
 Skethaway, Ken, 82, 115
 Smith, Ellis, 210, 214
 Smith T. Dan, 69, 82, 115
 Snobel, Alf, 226
 Snobel, Nettie, 226
Socialist Appeal, 10, 53, 63, 64, 65, 71, 75, 89
 n.10, 100, 105, 111 n.14, 192-3, 223, 229
 Socialist Fellowship, 149, 213, 214
Socialist Fight 40
Socialist Outlook, 149, 210, 211, 212, 228, 234
 n.15
 Socialist Workers' Group, 40
 Socialist Workers' Party (USA), xi, 13, 29, 32,
 99, 111 n.14, 172-5, 178, 197, 214, 215, 222,
 223
Solidarität, 84-5
 Sorensen, Reg, 64, 129
 Springhall, David, 37
 Stanley, Jack, 210, 211
 Stanton, Cliff, 35, 38, 39, 45
 Strachan, Jessie, 3
 Stubbins, 117
 Sumner, Charles, 2, 20, 23, 46 n.5

 Tait, Tommy, 20
 Tait, Willie, 20, 23, 24
 Tearse, Roy, 59, 68-70, 73-4, 80, 95 n.152,
 109, 116, 117, 118, 120, 127, 128, 130, 131,
 132, 133, 134, 146, 149, 150, 153 n.13, 161,
 175, 181, 226, 228, 231
 Thomas, Alum, 139, 157 n.51
 Thomas, Joe, 112 n.39
 Tippet, Michael, 4
 Togliatti, Palmiro, 31-2
 Trench, Paddy, 10
 Trewartha, Tom, 74, 93 n.110, 131, 153 n.13
 Trotsky, Natalia, 99, 181, 216, 219
 Trotskyist Opposition (RSL) 39, 40, 42, 43,
 100, 103, 104-5, 107, 110, 113 n.61,
 Tyneside Apprentices' Strike, 115-9

 Van Gelderen, Charles, 2, 3, 4, 23, 29-32, 35,
 150, 190, 207 n.136, 210, 213, 233, 246
 Van Heijenoort, Jean, 42, 172, 175
 Vietnam, 32, 216
Voice of Labour, 148, 149

 Wainwright, William H., 64, 65-6, 72
 Walker, Ann, 166
 Ward, 11, 12, 19 n.41
 Ward, Frank, 137, 139, 140, 185, 223, 224,
 229, 230
 Weston, George, 91 n.39
 Westwood, Karl, 193
 Wicks, Harry, 22, 26, 34, 70
 Wigham, Wilfrid, 34
 Williams, D. J., 136, 139, 140
 Williams, John, 9, 88, 153 n.13
 Wilsker, Bob, 82-5

Workers' Diary, 11

Workers' Fight, 25, 33, 35, 36, 39

Workers' International League, Ch.1, 21, 23,
24, 25, 29, 39, 46 n.5, Ch.3, Ch.4, 198

Workers' International News, 5, 10, 11, 39, 71,
81, 105, 111 n.114, 199, 223

Workers' Party of South Africa, 3

Youth for Socialism 5, 8, 10, 11, 53

Yugoslavia, 212, 218-21, 232-3

Zilliacus, Konni, 210, 211

Already available in this series

***"Two Steps Back"* by Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, a study in the relations between the Communist Party and the broader labour movement 1935-45.**

ISBN 0 9508423 0 3, paperback £3 50p.

***"Against the Stream"* by Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, a history of the Trotskyist movement in Britain, 1924-28.**

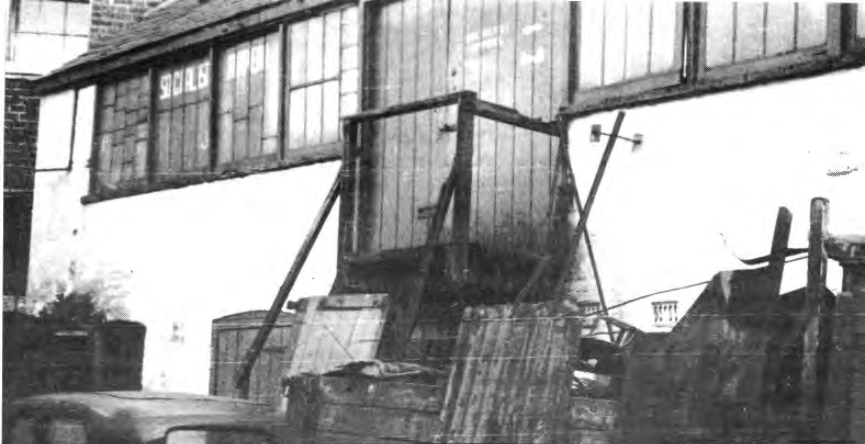
ISBN 0 9508423 1 1 (hardback) £19 95p,

ISBN 0 9508423 2 X (paperback) £5 95p.

Coming shortly from Socialist Platform:

***"An Introduction to the Philosophy of Marxism"* by R.S. Bhagavan, ingeniously put together from the Marxist classics and presented to the beginner in a clear and logical arrangement.**

STATEMENT OF THE



a)

2a. The W.I.L. Centre,
61 Northdown Street,
Kings Cross.

b. The R.C.P. Centre,
256 Harrow Road.



b)



3. The Neath By-elections, 1945.





4. R.C.P. Mayday Demonstration, 1946.





This is the sequel to the successful "Against the Stream", bringing the story of Trotskyism in Britain up to 1949. During this period Trotskyism gained a small but effective basis within the working class, and led a number of strikes during and after the Second World War. The introduction of revolutionary practice into the life of the working class in turn led to the elaboration of theory on a far higher plane than before. Much of the material that appears here is quite unique, and as the chief Trotskyist groups of today have their origin in this time, no one interested in the general affairs of the labour movement can afford to neglect it.

£5.95 ISBN 0 9508423 3 8

**Available from
Housemans Distributors
5 Caledonian Road
London N.1.**